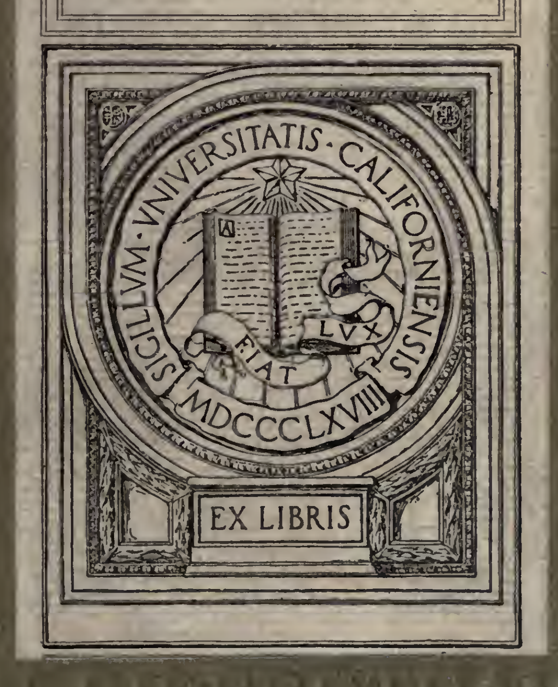

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LORD GREY.

PILLARS OF THE STATE

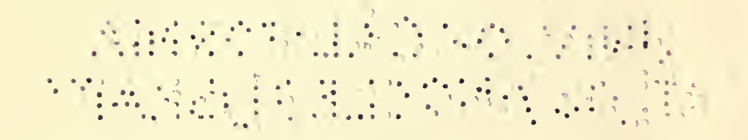
BY

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("A Student of Politics")



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

MOST of the essays in this volume have appeared serially in the columns of *The Times*, whose proprietors the author takes this opportunity of thanking for their permission to republish. Some additions have been made, but only to bridge the gulf between their first appearance and their present publication.

The essays on Mr. Lloyd George, on Lady Astor and Captain Elliot, and the introductory and final chapters, are now published for the first time.

I have to thank my friend, Mr. James Heddle, of Sir Edward Hulton's publications, for loans of photographs and for help in choosing them.

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THE PRESS
GALLERY

INTRODUCTORY

THE PRESS GALLERY

THE author was for some eighteen months a representative of *The Times* in the Press Galleries of the Houses of Parliament, and the studies that follow are based mainly on observation from these high latitudes, and only in a few instances from personal acquaintance with their subjects. It is a strange life, that of the Press Gallery of the House of Commons, especially to one entering it after many years spent behind the purdah of the leader-writer, and quite as interesting as the life of the floor of the House or of the Terrace. Distinguished strangers in their gallery must often have noticed the row of men in the gallery opposite behind the Speaker's Chair, each in his little pew, and every one more oddly intellectual in appearance than the others. These are the Press Gallery journalists. Some are seen to be taking copious notes, and these are the reporters, pre-Raphaelite artists whose business it is to set down exactly what people say in the debate, improving its

grammar, removing tautology, and making sense where this is lacking. Others write very little, but sit disdainfully observant, and these are the impressionists, who are there to make a study of the proceedings for indolent readers, and are called "sketch-writers." The reporters work in shifts of a quarter of an hour at a time, and the distinguished stranger opposite cannot have failed to notice the new shift enter by one or other of the two doors at the back of the gallery, each with its liveried Cerberus, tap the old shift on the shoulder, and take his place. People are always coming and leaving, but the disdainful impressionists go out oftener than they come in, for their art is that of rejection.

Through the doors there are two anti-chambers with telephone boxes, both leading into a room full of black oak desks, with deep corner seats covered with shiny leather in two corners, a post-office in another corner, and doors everywhere. Here there is always a buzz of voices comparing notes of the speeches, and checking doubtful passages; here, if a quotation has been made from the Latin classics (which happens about once a session), the passer-by who has been to Oxford is asked to verify and translate, and made to feel for a brief moment that the money his father spent

on his education was after all not all waste. There are other similar rooms on the same floor, one of which is reserved to *The Times*, a privilege jealously guarded and greatly envied. Everywhere else the passer-by can overhear résumés of the proceedings being shouted over telephones to various newspapers; there is the scurry of newsagency boys carrying messages, the shuffling of ancient retainers, and the litter of copying blacks and other advanced journalistic technique. Except through the one private room of *The Times* there is a right of way everywhere, and there is incessant going and coming; it is half street, half office. A disdainful one fresh from tea will stop and ask someone coming out, Who's up? What did he say? Or, How did the House take that? And, being answered, as he always is, civilly, will go back to more tea or forward to more debate, according to his judgment. There are two upstairs floors also belonging to the Press Gallery, containing reading and writing rooms, a dining-room, news-rooms, a library, and three other rooms. One of these is a tea-bar, famous because tea is the drink of the intellectual, and because you go through it to get to the House of Lords or the Committee Rooms or the Lobbies. There is another bar, where towards the end of the

evening conversation is brilliant, or merely ponderous, and political reputations are made and unmade three times an hour. And there is a room called, for some reason, the boudoir, which is inhabited by people whose writing is so bad that they, out of love for their fellow-men, use typewriters. These unhappy but mostly deserving men sit herded into a small room far away from everyone, and when they are all in the throes of composition, the noise is like that of an Oldham spinning mill. The theory is that while one who uses a pen must be protected from the noise of a typewriter, the people who use typewriters love each other's noise. So hard is the way of the altruist.

In this strange world journalists are by themselves, though a vagrant Member of Parliament, if his manners are good, occasionally penetrates. You find your way about it by walking corkscrew fashion, turning as often as possible to the left if you are going upstairs, and to the right if you are coming down. They are a very happy family, and surely there is no place in the world where there is so much jostling of helpful and amiable understanding, for there is no room for jealousy amongst men who do so much writing that they have no time for reading, least of all what their friends write. Some are paid by

quantity, and these by dint of hard work that a nigger blackleg would scorn are alleged to make large sums of money. Others never seem to work at all, having acquired a wonderful technique that enables them to turn out a column while you turn your back. Others unhappily bite the ends of their penholders, or indulge in *rallentandos* and long pauses on their typewriters in search of the just and exact word. Everywhere is a high if somewhat cynical conscientiousness. No writing to speak of is done in the House itself. To know when to be in the House and when it is safe to be out of it requires a strategic sense, which, if they were generals, would win them an earldom; but occasionally there are "break-throughs" of debate, which make pie of everything that has been written earlier, and if this takes place late at night you get scenes of indescribable valour, and your languid impressionist becomes a Brigadier-General Carey. If only these men could write what they think and say, what wonderful documents newspapers would be. Alas, all newspapers—well, nearly all—write down to the level of propaganda. But there is no such blight, thank goodness, on the opinions of newspaper men that are not published. The pen is sworn, but the mind remains unsworn, behind those swinging

doors and up those crooked staircases. Every night hundreds of little babies of political thought are murdered because they are born out of party wedlock, and may not come down to a respectable family breakfast.

There is yet a third class of Parliamentary journalists, known as the Lobby men. The business of these people is to get political news, and with this object they hang about the Lobbies, waylaying Members as they emerge from the House or just as often being waylaid by them, seeking explanations from Ministers, trying to take everyone's temperature, enduring long and suffering all things, publicly evaded, secretly courted. There is a high standard of professional honour amongst these men. The surest way to have a secret kept is to impart it to them in confidence; the surest way to have it published is to refuse confidence. Every political sin will be forgiven by these men but deception or attempted deception. They wear for the most part a sad and anxious look, and make an outward show of deep suspicion towards each other's enterprise, but in fact work in rings in which the information obtained by any member is at the service of all the other partners. Only one of these Lobby men is known to be a Conservative, and the job seems to dye everyone's mind to one of the

many shades of Liberalism. But, like the gallery men, they have a wonderful knack of separating their private and their *ex-officio* opinions. Who shall paragraph the paragraphists ?

But to return to the House. It fills up three times a day. The first time is for questions, which, from their miscellaneous character, always yield topics of interest. These last from a quarter to three to a quarter to four, and are followed by questions of which private notice has been given to a Minister. These frequently relate to the more urgent political matters of the hour, and Ministers who have a definite statement that they wish to make usually take this opportunity. Questions over, you hear a voice crying in the Lobbies outside, " Orders of the Day," but unless some new Bill or other important question is coming on immediately, the voice is the signal for Members who are in to troop out, not for those who are out to come in. A House of fifty or sixty is not noticeably thin. If an important speaker is up, Members will come in, for all the smoke-rooms and reading-rooms have what is called an indicator, giving the name of the speaker. Three-fourths of the Members who vote in the average division have not heard a word of the debate, but in many cases the arguments used

are only hotted up from the committee-room debates, and everything that can be said for or against is familiar. The hardest work of Members (it may be here observed) is done in committee upstairs, which means in one or other of the rooms off the long corridor which journalists reach by way of the tea-room. By six the House fills up again, for it is in the hour before dinner that Ministers and other important speakers usually rise. The House does not adjourn for dinner, but sits continuously, and the hours between half-past seven and nine, when the benches are nearly empty, is the time when new and shy Members, if they are wise, get used to the sound of their voices in the House. At half-past nine the House fills up again, and often, if the debate is a live one, the best speaking of the day is heard now, for sensibility is keenest after a wise dinner. At eleven, in normal conditions, the House rises. The cry "Who goes home?" echoes through the Lobbies, traditional from the days when it was safer to have company in the streets at night.

In appearance the House of Commons is very like a medium-sized panelled Nonconformist chapel, with the Speaker's Chair at the east end opposite the door, which opens out on to the Members' Lobby, a large round hall into

which, from the Press Gallery, you can just see through the glass doors. Some twelve feet in from the door there is a brass plate across the carpet which is known as the Bar, and marks the boundary of the floor of the House. Between the Bar and the door you are technically not in the House, and may stand about listening, but not officially visible to the Speaker; but when you have crossed the Bar you must make your way to your seat, bowing in the direction of the Speaker, not to him, but to the altar of St. Stephen's, which once stood where his chair is. There is a wide centre aisle leading to the Table, which is in front of the Speaker's Chair. The green carpet of the room is over a grated floor, through which fresh air, drawn in from the river, and cleansed of its microbes and of its life at the same time, ascends into the chamber. When they are searching the cellars below for Guy Fawkes or Sinn Fein, or replacing the cotton-wool through which the air is passed, you can see the lights moving about through the carpet. The artificial lighting is from thick glass in the ceiling, and by reason of its yellow quality simulates daylight well. The benches are green like the carpet, and at night, when the dark red curtains are drawn, the chamber looks very cosy.

These details, it is to be hoped, are not too trivial for chronicling about so great a room, and they are set down here because it is just the things that are very familiar that usually escape being told to those who have never seen them. The benches run lengthwise to the chamber, and are divided into four blocks by a narrow transept called the gangway; and it may help those who do not know the House to form a better idea of its debates to describe the topography of the various party and personal groupings. (Those who know all about it may be advised to skip a few pages.) Three out of the four blocks are occupied mainly by the Government and its supporters. Immediately to the right of the Speaker's Chair is the Front Ministerial Bench, where sit the members of the Government, or as many of them as there is room for or as want to be in the House. The one who is speaking usually moves towards the middle of the bench so as to be opposite the box at the end of the table, and have something to thump out his arguments on. It is one of the privileges of Ministers (and also of the Front Opposition bench opposite) to put their feet up on the table, but when their legs are short they have to get their shoulders well down to reach it, giving the impression of men trying to stand on their heads. It is curious to watch the

various mannerisms of Ministers listening to criticism. Mr. Lloyd George shows by his face and an affirmative nod or negative shake of the head what is passing through his mind—the clouds and sunshine chase across his face; Mr. Churchill will often lean forward with his elbows on his knees, make paper triangles, and twirl them round industriously on his joined thumbs. Sir Gordon Hewart sits Sphinx-like and expressionless; Mr. Bonar Law used to show that he was paying attention by opening his eyes wider; Sir Eric Geddes by lifting up a leg and nursing it. No reputation ever stands still there. Mr. Chamberlain's, despite his mastery of Parliamentary form and style, has dropped since he became leader of the House, Sir Gordon Hewart's has risen, and he is now the hope of those who work for the return of the Liberal Independents, and by some is being thought of as a possible leader. Sir Eric Geddes, after a long period of depreciation, is beginning to be valued as the time comes for him to leave political life. Mr. Cecil Harmsworth, who always sits at the end of the Front Bench, manages to be both discreet and well liked as Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and from the same bench you may hear the even *mezzo forte* common sense of Sir Robert Horne, the graceful argument of Mr. Stanley Baldwin,

his successor at the Board of Trade, the defiant and official *sforzando*—somewhat too dry and stiff for his years—of Sir Philip Graeme, and the staccato syncopation of Commander Hilton Young. Nor should one forget Sir Hamar Greenwood on his day, with his thunderous insistence on the expletively obvious, playing his Irish nocturnes (this rut of musical metaphore is hard to get out of) like a muscular collier wrestling with the Battle of Prague.

Behind the Front Bench are Sir John Rees, a Liberal Coalitionist, who devotes an eighteenth-century elegance of diction to the service of mid-Victorian reaction; Sir Philip Sassoon, Private Secretary of the Prime Minister, caricatured by Mr. Max Beerbohm as a Jewish Buddha, squatting silent and wise; Mr. Ormsby-Gore, a son-in-law of the Marquis of Salisbury, a Cecilian with the fire of energy and ambition in him, rising rapidly in esteem and effectiveness; and those twin Coalitionists, the Liberal Captain Coote, cold as beseems a Balliol man, but incisive and independent of mind, and the so-called Conservative Captain Elliot, bubbling with energy and pullulating with ideas; Mr. Leng-Sturrock, amiably cynical; Sir Henry Craik, plaintively Tory. Here, too, before he moved over to the Liberal benches, Lord Robert Cecil used to sit.

Across the gangway on the same side of the House are several interesting groups. On the middle bench sit the Ulster Members (Lord Carson no longer with them), the Protestant virtue sticking out of them like a hedgehog's spines; on the front bench the Workers' League, a labour party with its claws drawn; and on the back row the Cecilian group, open-eyed and progressive Conservatives. From this block usually speaks Mr. Austin Hopkinson. Son of a Chancery barrister, who is ex-Vice-Chancellor of Manchester University, Mr. Hopkinson distinguished himself in the war both as an officer and a private. He had already attained quite remarkable success in business when he enlisted as a private, and he has evolved in Parliament a new philosophy of the relations of capital and labour. The duty of the capitalist, in his view, is to live on as little and to work as hard and as skilfully as he can. His idea of the capitalist-priest, taking vows of poverty, in order to give his men an example of efficiency, has repelled more than it has attracted, but is far more amiable than the stock caricature of the capitalist as a grossly fat man with a monstrous cigar in the corner of his mouth. He speaks with an elegant diction and a somewhat affected and mincing manner; he never quite agrees with

anybody else; but he is one of the men in this Parliament who will be heard of again.

It is the fashion to decry the Parliament of 1918, but in truth it has some virtues that previous Houses had not. Its opinions are fluid, and it is as susceptible to a powerful piece of rhetoric as a young man to beauty. When one of the good men are speaking, you can see its opinions changing like the sea under the shadow of a cloud, or at the shudder of an approaching wind. With all its faults it holds up the mirror to the moods of the nation, and in the present state of the country its open and pliable mind is far more serviceable than the frozen trench warfare of fixed principles.

We cross the floor of the House to its third quarter, below the gangway on the Speaker's left. Here are the remnant of the Old Irish Nationalist Party, Mr. O'Connor, Mr. Devlin, Major Redmond, and Mr. McVeagh; a phalanx of big business men; and on the front row the anti-wasters. These last, who are such sirens in the constituencies, cut a very poor figure in Parliament, and they have never been able to meet the spenders on equal terms. The best of them is the youngest, Mr. Esmond Harmsworth, who is really a mid-Victorian Radical; and will probably do well with more experience. But no party can live on a

negation. Mr. Bottomley speaks as well as Mr. Asquith, and with a great deal of his reticence and sonority, but his political ideas get all their leaven from human ignorance and folly, and his cynicism is sometimes unpleasant. The Irishmen, on the other hand, have faith in the ideal and the gift of rhetoric, which starts tears to the eyes and passionate longing to be on the side of men who can lose so eloquently. But the old bouquet that they raise for us to smell has lost its fragrance, and the canker of disappointment has devoured its petals. How bitterly liberty has mocked their efforts—

> Forth sprang the impassioned queen her lord to clasp !
> Again that consummation she essayed ;
> But the unsubstantial form eludes her grasp
> As often as that eager grasp was made.
> The phantom parts—but parts to reunite
> And reassume its place before her sight.

The fourth quarter of the Benches includes the Independent Liberals and the Labour men. Most conspicuous among them, and in some ways the most remarkable figure in the Opposition, is Commander Kenworthy, who sits at the end of the second row. Next to the Prime Minister and the law officers, he works harder than anyone in the House. He is reputed to have a staff of secretaries whom he

keeps busy reading for him and working up subjects, and his interests are as extensive as they are detailed. He came into fame as a rationaliser of the Russian revolution and as a bitter enemy of our interference with Bolshevism in Eastern Europe; and the secret mental sympathy which sprang up between him and the Prime Minister at that time has never withered since. He speaks fluently but not very well, for he lacks the art of persuasion, and he dissipates his activities over too wide a range of subjects. But he has a thick skin, courage, immense industry, and an unmistakable *flair*, and his services to the Opposition have been invaluable. He will hold office some day—the navy, one of the subjects on which he speaks with authority, might find him opportunity for useful constructive work. An orthodox Liberal he is not, and his development, one suspects, will be towards a new Radicalism, and later in life towards Toryism. His neighbour in the House, and friend, Colonel Wedgwood, is a dissatisfied Liberal who nominally belongs to the Labour Party, but remains a Liberal still, for a Liberal creed is capable of almost indefinite extension to the left. He is the frankest speaker in the House, and a man of brilliant *apercus* usually conveyed in asides rather than on the main current of his

argument. Other men in this quarter of the House are Captain W. Wedgwood Benn, a sincere Liberal, who marshals his facts well, but whose exposition of principles suffers sometimes from the entanglement of his coat-tails; Mr. George Lambert, one of the few whole-hearted Liberal individualists left, and a very trenchant speaker; Sir Donald Maclean, looking his part as Liberal leader, sincere if somewhat conventional in his Liberal instinct, and at times tending to the forcible-feeble; General Seely, gallant leader of forlorn hopes; Mr. Hogge, who, with Mr. John Wallace, has latterly played the part of liaison officer between the Coalition and Independent Liberal wings. But in so short a chapter one must avoid the sin of cataloguing.

To sit above the Speaker's Chair for eighteen months and to overlook the wonderful game below, to see so many men working for justice as they conceive it, to feel one's sympathies borne now this way now that on the strong currents of argument, and to realise how much more goes to the making of politics than mere intellectual ability, or even moral conviction—there is no such cure for the despair that so easily overcomes the student of politics groping amongst ideas in the solitude of his room, or for the flippancy towards the workers in politics

which is so common amongst clever theorists who take care to avoid the dust and heat of the work-room. On the other hand, to sit and watch for twenty years as some have done would be to become a dungeon of Parliamentary learning, and to acquire such an awe before the workings of this greatest of political institutions that criticism would become almost an irreverence. And that must be the writer's excuse for writing on Parliamentary figures from the fullness of new acquaintance before the freshness of impressions becomes blurred and the freedom of an observer becomes mortgaged to respect.

He has several times been asked by old gallerymen what is the dominant impression that he gets of the House coming fresh to it, or what is the scene that lingers most in his memory, or what is the best speech that he has heard. The dominant impression is one of the amazing sincerity, if not of politics, at any rate of the average Members of the House of Commons. The scene that still lingers from first experience is the banging of the doors of the Chamber when Blackrod, the House of Lords messenger, approaches with a summons to hear the Royal assent given to a Bill, and knocks three times at the door for admittance. It is a vivid reminder of the past, when the Commons

had to fight for its powers against an arrogant and sometimes even violent Executive. The three best speeches in the time he has been there were undoubtedly the Prime Minister's on Ireland in December 1920, Mr. Churchill's speech defending the Government for its punishment of General Dyer for his share in the Amritsar outrages, and Lord Sumner's speech on the same subject, but on the other side, in the House of Lords. The first was a wonderful example of imaginative poise and balance, the second of skill in the handling and conversion of opposition, and the third of the power of intellectualism, hard, cold, and uninspired.

LORD GREY
OF FALLODON

I

LORD GREY OF FALLODON

ALL Lord Grey's political life has been the expression not of ambitions nor even of views so much as of character. His is a type of character happily not uncommon in England, especially amongst the lesser nobility from which he sprang, but it eludes description, as very smooth, regular features defy caricature. Its distinction lies in the avoidance of saliences and eccentricities whether of expression, of thought, or of emotion; in being the hero of no story and the author of no epigram; in a reserve that is too proud to be vain, too shy to be arrogant. Some men gain their place in politics by their power of understanding other people, others by making it necessary for others to understand them, and Lord Grey is amongst these last. He has never been anything but himself; he yields nothing to the mood of his audience and is apparently indifferent to its applause; outwardly calm and self-contained, he never strains a subject or the attention of his listeners,

but maintains both on the same even high level of seriousness.

Men of this temperament have always commanded great influence in counsel, especially when, as in Lord Grey's case, there is obvious ability without the suspicion of cleverness. For in politics cleverness is always a danger signal, and often substitutes dissent for conviction, even at the moment when it seems to be most effective. In this disarming suggestion of the plain man, taking his day's work as it comes and dealing with difficulties as they arise, each on its merits and without reference to theories or formulæ, Lord Grey is more like the late Duke of Devonshire than anyone else in our politics. There is probably more art in his persuasiveness than appears, but it is not that of studied effects, but rather the product of long hours of half-conscious cerebration. He rarely makes a composition of his speeches beforehand, but, like every fly-fisher, he is fond of solitude, and it was perhaps at these moments that he acquired the art of thinking aloud persuasively, which is their distinguishing quality. On the other hand, some of his speeches, notably that on the Monday before the war, one on arbitration with the United States made in 1911, and the more recent speech on the Government's Home

Rule Bill in the Lords, have been fine examples of set oratory, all the more impressive from their complete lack of ornament. But excellent as they are in arrangement, and carried through on an even level of seriousness, his speeches owe their power mainly to the impression of high character and plain, sincere thinking.

Lord Grey gave few indications of greatness before the revival of Liberalism which began after the Boer War. At Winchester and Balliol he was serious without priggishness, but also without distinction, except at tennis, and no prophecy of Jowett's is reported about him, like those about Asquith and Lansdowne. His first acquaintance with affairs was gained as private secretary to Sir Evelyn Baring (as he then was), in Egypt, but no quality has been attributed to his work at this time but that of even competence, and he would doubtfully have obtained the post of Under-Secretary in the Liberal Government of 1892–1895 but for the influence of Lord Rosebery. Already the cleavage in the Liberal Party was evident, which later was to go so deep, for Gladstone at this time was prepared to discuss the evacuation of Egypt but for the resistance and, indeed, the veto of Lord Rosebery, and the Under-Secretary was on the side of his Foreign Office chief and against the Gladstonian

impulse. It was Grey, again, who, as Under-Secretary, gave the warning to France about the Nile which later became the stock quotation on our side of the Fashoda controversy. And Grey was the strongest member of the Liberal League triumvirate which sought to combat what it regarded as the excesses of the anti-Imperial reaction in the Liberal Party in the decade round the turn of the century. He refused to oppose the reconquest of the Sudan, believed in the future of British East Africa, supported the policy of the South African War, and dissociated himself from the rancour of Liberal criticism on the moribund Chamberlain-Balfour Ministry. Yet he was never a sterile Whig, for his views on Labour policy were frequently advanced (in this respect he was like Lord Haldane, another of the triumvirs), and though he had some reserves on Gladstonian Home Rule, he was always loyal to the Irish National demands. But on foreign and Imperial policy he not merely disagreed with the policy of the numerical majority of his party, but regarded it with alarm. When the Liberal Government of 1906 was being formed, he refused the Foreign Office unless Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, against whom the Liberal Leaguers had been in revolt, went to the Lords, and it was with the greatest

difficulty that he was induced to waive this condition. There is a vein of stubbornness in his nature which on matters of importance indisposes him to compromise.

These facts need to be remembered if we are justly to estimate the quality of his conduct of foreign affairs in the eight years before the war. The election of 1906, except to the limited extent to which the relative merits of Free Trade and Protection were the issue, was almost as heavy a defeat for the Liberal Leaguers as for the Conservatives, and the new Foreign Secretary entered on his work knowing that the sentiment of the majority in his party was out of sympathy with his views. Already, while the General Election was still in progress, he had begun those conversations with France which led inevitably to our Alliance in the late war, and there can be little doubt that, had their meaning and implications been understood, the whole policy would at that time have been repudiated by the vast majority of Liberals—to their bitter regret later. Never has a Foreign Secretary been confronted with problems so grave as Sir Edward Grey's in these years, and never amid domestic circumstances of such difficulty and delicacy. Throughout the whole of this period there was a powerful opposition within the party, and on

that fateful Monday before the war when Grey, for the first time, laid the whole facts before the country, he could hope, but could not know for certain, that he would carry the House with him. There is probably not another man in politics who, in these circumstances, could have kept on an even keel all through these years, have avoided the innumerable temptations to political dishonesty, and steadily improved his moral influence all the time. In 1906 little more than a name, in 1914 he wielded a moral sway such as hardly another Foreign Secretary has ever done. With every one of his enemies—and he had many—ransacking everything that he said about our relations with Germany, none ever succeeded in putting his hand on a single sentence and saying, "There you deceived us." The most they could ever say with truth was: "You did not tell us all." It will always be one of the most interesting speculations in politics how the event would have shaped itself if he had.

Lord Grey derived much strength from the extreme candour with which he always stated his views on the relations between party politics and foreign policy. He was one of the earliest advocates of the continuity of foreign policy, and on taking office he avowed his

intention of continuing the foreign policy of Lord Lansdowne. There is no hard-and-fast distinction between home and foreign affairs, as the events of the last seven years have proved, and that being so, it is a hard saying, without qualification, that a Liberal foreign policy is the same as a Conservative, and the other way about. What Lord Grey meant was that, inasmuch as its risks are enormous, and are carried by the whole nation, foreign policy should be a national policy fused of Liberal and Conservative traditions. In fact, throughout the whole of his period as Foreign Secretary he was a Coalition Minister in a Liberal Government, and he missed no opportunity of making that clear. What he concealed was never the ends but only the means of policy, but even this degree of concealment has to this day made him an object of some suspicion to Liberals of a certain type. His defence would be that public diplomacy means frankness as to objects and principles of foreign policy, and can never mean that all its conversations must be held in the street within earshot of anyone who cares to listen. The steady growth in his reputation for singleness of mind is proof, if proof were needed, that coalition need not mean doubleness of policy unless there is a doubleness of mind.

Lord Grey is sensitively humane, and the cruelty and strain of the war affected him perhaps more than most. His object in developing the Entente with France, and concluding the peace with Russia, was to ensure the peace of the world, and the outbreak of the war was a bitter disappointment of his hopes. His second hope, that the war would be short, was disappointed too, and the accusation, frequently made abroad, that he was responsible for the war cut him like a knife. The very bitterest German cartoon in the whole war was one that depicted him as Dorian Grey, standing as he might have done at the top of the Foreign Office staircase and surveying a hideous portrait of himself dripping with blood. For a time it looked as though the cruelty of war and his partial blindness had broken him for politics. But peace has brought him back into politics with restored sight and health, and with perhaps the first real ambition he has yet entertained in his life—namely, to do solid and enduring work for the peace of the world. The tribulation of the war has removed some of the old limitations of temperament without changing his views. He still, as in 1911, holds to his belief in the friendship of England and America as the key to the future of the world. He still repudiates the

old doctrine which Salisbury and the stronger wing of the Liberal Party held of splendid isolation, and now, as in 1906, he believes that we must have firm and constant friends in Europe, and that of these the friendship of France is the most necessary and the most fertile of beneficence. But he has found in the League of Nations a new instrument, and a translation into the practical forms of legislation of the old aspirations of the Concert of Europe which so fascinated Gladstone. He has repudiated the idea of coalition, but that is a matter of phrasing rather than of substance. By coalition he understands a loose amalgam of inconsistent political ideas; by party government he means a college of men with common ideas of policy, but not necessarily of men all drawn from one party, for that, if it were desirable, is not possible so far as we can see ahead. To this work he brings not genius or impressionism, but faith and simplicity of mind.



[*L.N.A.*

LORD ROBERT CECIL AND MR. A. J. BALFOUR.

II

THE CECILIANS

MR. BALFOUR, now floridly benign, a rich oracular voice issuing forth from the obscurer recesses of the Coalition; Lord Robert Cecil, a Hamlet in politics, noble of sentiment and frail of purpose; Lord Hugh, Mercutio in a cowl, intellectually athletic on a diet of dilemmas; Mr. Ormsby-Gore, still looking like an Eton boy, full of gentleness and good sense; as First, Second, and Third Gentlemen, the trenchant Lord Winterton, Mr. Walter Guinness the frank, and Mr. Edward Wood the earnest, not forgetting Lord Wolmer, though one seldom sees him, and, of course, the Marquess of Salisbury, carrying but hardly wielding the sword of his great name. These are the Cecilians. Besides Mr. Wood, Under-Secretary of the Colonies, only one, Mr. Balfour, sits on the Front Bench, but wherever they sit the Cecilians have their minds at any rate on the Front Bench. They were born to the Ministry, whether they get there or not.

For a generation before the war they had

been fighting a losing battle. It was they and their kind who had to do most of the fighting with Gladstone, and they survived the frontal attacks of the Liberals only to be outflanked and ousted from power by their ex-Radical janissaries. They still hold out in a corner of the stricken field, strongly entrenched in the old hall garden, but Mr. Balfour, one fears, was the last of the hereditary rulers of the Conservative Party. Ought one to fear, or rather to rejoice, over it? There is room for both sentiments. It would be a grave matter if the great political virtues that one associates with the Cecilians were lost to the party by reason of their faults; on the other hand, one wonders, after all, whether these virtues will not have a better chance when their owners have to fight for their decisions instead of promulgating them.

For twenty years before the war there was hardly an enthusiasm in politics that did not find its enemies in the Cecils. Irish Home Rule, Tariff Reform, Imperial Federation, nearly every suggestion for organic change has withered alike under their sympathy and their opposition; every passion and nearly every hope in politics owes them a grudge, none the less deep because their criticism has often been wise and justified by the event. Isolated on a

pinnacle of I told you so, it is nothing to be surprised at that their influence in the party should have sunk so low. But Cecilians who could construct as well as they criticise, attack as skilfully as they retire, find as many good reasons for doing something as for doing nothing in particular, might again be a great power in politics, and it may be that the final overthrow of the legitimist dynasty in the party will contribute to this change of their nature.

From Mr. Balfour nothing is to be hoped. He does not seriously believe in politics as an instrument of human progress; to him they are merely the art of neutralising forces and engaging them in an equilibrium that is more or less stable so that the really serious activities of the world may not be interfered with. What these are, may vary. For Mr. Balfour they are the critical enjoyment of the intellectual play of human life, with himself in a comfortable box; for others, the making of money; he himself has said that what makes most difference to human happiness is science, thinking that, perhaps, because he knows so little about it. Office he loves, not for the sake of exercising power, but for the feeling that it gives him that he could exercise power if he chose to do so. In fact, he no more

influences the policy of the Coalition than Jonah steered the whale.

Outside the Government his keen analytic mind might have been of inestimable service; but then he could not have been behind the scenes, where he loves to be, and besides, if there be anything permanent in Coalition, he wants to be in and to see that no Curzon jumps a Cecil claim. And so he is a sleeping partner in the Government, as he was in his own Government when Mr. Chamberlain was at the height of his power, but with this difference, that he is many degrees more removed from the throne of popular favour and that in the meantime most of his party has slipped away from him. Hard fate for one who worked so hard for party unity as Mr. Balfour has done, and yet not unjust. He preferred the forms of party unity to the living convictions and enthusiasms that make party real, and he is left clasping the unsubstantial shadow. The most brilliant and the most sterile mind in modern politics, he is not the man who can breathe life into the cold Cecilian ideals.

Are any of the other Cecilians in better plight? Conservatism still stands for the idea of discipline in public life, for

> degree, priority and place,
> Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
> Office and custom in all line of order—

for "that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom," and with all Cecilians conceptions like these are bred in the bone, matters not of argument but of instinct. Moreover, the sceptical and critical English mind, if it is rarely found on the summits of achievement, is as precious as lime in the valleys below, and one cannot deprive Conservatism of its habit of scepticism towards the new and unknown, and its acid analysis of enthusiasms without its being the loser. When all is said against the Cecils they have always contributed these gifts to politics. Conservatism will not get these things from the new Radical school within the party. To the newer school of Conservatism, the connection with a Radical of some sort, whether called Disraeli or Chamberlain or Lloyd George, is life; to the old school it is death. That is the moral of Mr. Balfour's career. Can our modern Cecils remake Toryism in new forms?

The chief hope is in Lord Robert Cecil; Lord Hugh is the abler man, but with him politics at best are only the clamp of ordered society, and the springs which move its elaborate mechanism are to be found in religion

alone. The age is not really irreligious, but the semi-political forms of Lord Hugh's religion do not attract it, and for all the brilliancy of his intellect he is disqualified for leadership. Lord Robert Cecil is in better case, and less than a year ago he seemed marked out to be the real leader of the Opposition. He has dignity and a personality; he speaks well enough always, and, when he is moved, with eloquence; he has character and the broad humanity of his class, something of Mr. Balfour's dialectical skill combined with greater fertility of idea and more industry. The House thought much of him, and from the Labour benches in particular he always had an attentive and sympathetic hearing. For between Toryism and Socialism there is a natural sympathy; Mr. Herbert Spencer used to call Socialism the new Toryism, because both accepted the theory of the omnipotent State. Had Lord Robert Cecil's thought run into the forms of Tory Socialism he might have been assured of a following in the country, if not in the House, and Socialism, which suffers from the blight of materialism, would have gained by contact with his idealism. It might also have learnt something of the arts of political dodgery, which the Cecils have cultivated not out of badness, but by way of concession to a world that they believe would

not understand them if they were wholly frank.

But the Cecils, though some of them believe in an omnipotent Church, have always opposed the idea of an omnipotent State, and if Lord Robert was ever under temptation to develop in that direction, the war would have cured him of it. He is the keenest champion of individual rights, bitterly critical of bureaucracy, and anxious to contract the functions of the State. These intellectual convictions were deepened by the long anguish of the war, and when at the end of it there emerged the conception of the League of Nations he embraced it as a new gospel. The League took a place in his political philosophy comparable to that occupied by the Church with Lord Hugh, and by Mr. Balfour's conception of party as an insurance policy in a world full of accidents. It fitted in perfectly with his humane temperament and his political philosophy. Why should not a Cecil, repelled by the coarse enthusiasms of ordinary politics, find in the League a diviner air, where perfect witness is in the eyes of all-judging Jove alone, and the lost political greatness of the family clothe itself in a new cosmopolitan purple? An enemy of the pretensions of the State over the individual, why should he not seek to curb its excesses in

international affairs too and help to erect a new Areopagus? At last a Cecil was enthusiastic and even atune with the spirit of the age. Anything seemed possible.

These hopes that were formed of Lord Robert have not been realised, and the reason is that he cannot fight. Something always gets in the way, when there is something to be done as well as said, either consideration for his party, or the dislike that all his class have of a scene, or an instinctive Oxford repugnance for extremes, or it may be a temperamental reluctance to hurt anyone's feelings. He suffers from the fatal defect in rough-and-tumble politics of always seeing the strength of the argument against him, and he can no more stand up to the Prime Minister in a controversy than he could box with a dinosaur. It is not cowardice, but the intellectual fascination that the arguments of the other side have over him. When he makes a speech he cannot keep them out.

"I don't know," "Well, they may be right," "I don't wish to dogmatise," "I may be wrong," and with each successive phrase of that kind the spirits of his sympathisers droop more and more. He forgets that most human beings don't want to make up their own minds, but like someone to do that irksome work for

them. But if he is so respectful to his opponents' arguments when he himself is stating them, is it wonderful that when they come like fire from the mouth of that redoubtable dragon of debate, the Prime Minister, Lord Robert should be no St. George? Our Hamlet soliloquises threateningly, but when the talk is over he rarely votes against the Government, let alone sets out to kill it. Claudio and Gertrude still sit on the throne of his father, and if there is any killing by a Cecil the first to perish will be Polonius, he of the Foreign Office.

But if the Cecilians have still to learn the work of opposition, they have shown that they can strike fire and conceive a genuine enthusiasm. Mr. Balfour's Zionism is something, Lord Robert Cecil's advocacy of the League of Nations and his pity for the plight of Eastern Europe have had power and sincerity, and his humanity moves one. The younger men, too, have done well on Ireland and shown that, if they cannot as yet execute, they can conceive a problem in a big-hearted and generous way. These are promising signs, and there are still the makings of a new party, not big, perhaps, but influential and distinguished.

If all the Liberal Party were Asquiths, there would by this time have been an alliance between them and the Cecilians. They have much in

common—their coldness and scepticism, their attachment to forms, their dislike of enthusiasms and general ideas, their distrust of bureaucracy, their views on foreign affairs, on national economy, and on fiscal policy.[1] Liberals are not all Asquiths and Greys, but when the next split comes amongst the Independent Liberals—and that will be as soon as they are more numerous—there will be some, one fancies, who will find their nearest friends in their old enemies, the Cecilians. For the old party divisions are breaking down, and in the new ones that are forming there will be unexpected regroupings.

[1] Since this essay was written, Lord Robert Cecil has crossed the floor of the House and now sits on the Front Opposition Bench, amongst the Independent Liberals.

SIR ROBERT HORNE



Sir Robert Horne.

III

SIR ROBERT HORNE

SIR ROBERT HORNE, forty-nine, *homo novissimus*, son of a Scots parish minister, Grammar School boy (or its Scots equivalent), Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities, lecturer in philosophy in the University of Wales, and later teacher of another kind of philosophy, and at more profit to himself as a successful member of the Scots Bar, at the National Service Ministry when war came and associated with Sir Eric Geddes on the Army railways in France and at the Admiralty, Member of Parliament at the Armistice Election, Minister of Labour last year, this year President of the Board of Trade, next year Chancellor of the Exchequer [1] —there never was in politics quite so sudden arrival and rapid advancement. The English Attorney-General only eight years ago was still a junior on the Northern Circuit, but he was interested in politics before the law, and

[1] This was written in December 1920, but the writer, though he has added some modern sentences to the article, cannot bring himself to efface this prophecy.

even then had a fair record of political work behind him. Sir Eric Geddes, too, swam suddenly into the heavens, but as a comet rather than a fixed luminary. Sir Robert, more fortunate, has escaped attachment to an orbit of expertise and is free to range the whole field of politics.

He was certainly lucky in the moment of his arrival in politics, when the Prime Minister was on the look-out for new men and anxious to found a new school of administrators. But his detractors—success so rapid could not hope to escape them—are wrong who say that he is only lucky. The secret of his power is elusive. It is not in his speaking, which has a firm disciplined tread without wings or seduction, strong in argument and often racy in expression, but no precipitant of emotion. A vibrant voice, a friendly presence, and a good physique have helped, but alone could not explain success so remarkable. He is said to be a good administrator, and although one can well believe it in his case, civil servants will say that of every political chief who can sign his name, and the less he does besides that the more they think it. Nor, again, are we to see in the last two or three years the sudden maturing of long years of patiently-prepared plans.

" Dinna be a fool," his mother is reported to

have replied when he asked her opinion about his taking office, "come hame." Sir Robert Horne takes long views and is ambitious, but he is not a cold or calculating man, nor yet is he in politics because he is possessed by a faith that will give him no rest, or for any other reason than that it is work that he likes and for which his marked aptitude has taken no one by surprise so much as himself.

The characteristics that have embanked his great natural abilities to success are, one should say, high animal spirits, the Scottish sense of noble adventure, and an irrepressible fondness for the stuff of human nature—qualities that have never been given the high place in the hierarchy of political virtues that is their due. For politics are full of walking skeletons with labels attached. Once they were men to whom politics were the conflict of human feelings, an enlargement on a great scale of those expansions of affection, of ideas and pleasures shared, of help given and received which make the best part of human life. But someone came one day and attached a label to them; ever afterwards they were expected to illustrate what was written on the label, and if they departed from it they were thought to be men of no principle; and so they became mere lines in some parallelogram of forces, all

principles and no viscera. One sees this sort of thing happening every day in politics, and it is because they enable a man to resist the devitalisation of principles that the qualities characteristic of Sir Robert Horne have such importance. He is said to have warmed both hands at the fire of life; he has heard as many chimes at midnight as Lord Gladstone once boasted; he has been known to work hard all day when in busy practice at the Bar and to dance hard all night.

He likes young company for its easy birth of ideas; he has still enough philosophy to find perennial interest in new views, fresh generalisations of human life; but always, before he accepts them, he likes to see them translated into the terms of human nature and action; without this rich vein of Scottish caution he could hardly have remained until to-day that treasure of hostesses, an eligible dancing bachelor. He has something in common both with Sir Robert Walpole and with Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. He has the Walpole gift of seeing every political question in the terms of human nature; Walpole's coarseness, which was behind his age, has been refined in him to a genial and realistic view of affairs illustrated from an inexhaustible fund of good stories; his humanity, so much in

advance of his age, has descended in full measure. Again, without Bannerman's Liberal faith, burning inwardly, he has his freshness, his straightforwardness, and the bluntness that often manages to be persuasive and even coaxing.

The actual achievement of Sir Robert Horne, apart from his share in the settlement of industrial strife, is not great. But more important than the Legislation that comes from a Department are the daily and hourly interviews which its head has to conduct with all and sundry, and it is a Minister's handling of these matters, far more than the changes that he proposes in Parliament, that makes the time jarring or smooth. He had gained some knowledge of labour matters at the Admiralty, and doubtless it was his success there during the war, of which the world knows nothing, that took him to the Ministry of Labour at the peace.

It was a dangerous and critical time in the history of Labour politics, and a doctrinaire or a viewy man might easily have brought about a widespread conflagration. Sir Robert Horne was neither. He was personally liked by the Labour men; he gave the impression of open-mindedness and of one who was piecing together the parts of a new and enlightened policy of

peace between Capital and Labour, and only anxious to receive suggestions; his newness to politics, the fact that he was a Conservative, and his appearance of modesty all helped him; but he succeeded most of all, as might be expected, because he knew his subject very well and knew his men.

The principal facts in Labour politics since the Armistice are the series of defeats that direct action, both the theory and the practice, has suffered; the definite retrogression of the idea of nationalisation of industry, especially amongst the miners, where it was strongest, and the adoption by the miners of a principle, capable of being extended to other trades, that wages must stand in some relation to efficiency and to output. In all these changes of opinion, Sir Robert Horne had a great share, and his task, never an easy one, became very difficult during the coal strike of this year. The miners suspected him of being an owners' man, but on the other hand, owners often had cause to know that there was a rough side to his tongue. The blame for the sudden stoppage of control over the coal industry, which many thought was responsible for the obstinacy of the strike, was put on him; and other critics held that he was unnecessarily stubborn and uncompromising in his opposition to the "pool."

But throughout he was influenced by his views of what was necessary for the efficiency of the industry; what in his opinion would diminish output could not be for the good of the workers. So great was the importance that he attached to an alliance between trade unionism and industrial efficiency, that he was prepared to carry his resistance to almost any lengths. He helped and was helped by the growth of a moderate party amongst the workers; most of all he was helped by the state of our national finance and the facts of our industrial position. The estimate that will be formed of Sir Robert Horne's conduct of the dispute will depend very largely on whether behind this resistance to inefficiency in the mining industry is a constructive policy of industrial reform.

Sir Robert Horne was born a Disraelian Conservative, and he is still without any sort of sympathy with the dogmatic side of Liberalism. He has no faith in the extension of State activity. The essence of trade is that it is an adventure in which failures are the stages of progress as officers' graves are the milestones of Empire. State ownership is bad, or at best a disagreeable alternative, because it is assured against the consequences of financial failure and must eschew the spirit of

adventure that is the breath of business enterprise. An early convert to Tariff Reform, one predicts that his tenure of his present office as Chancellor of the Exchequer will modify his views considerably, and that he will end by rejecting Protectionist theory, and being a Free Trader with some reserves. In labour matters, he believes that there is no such thing as absolute ownership either of work done or profits made; both should be regarded as a trust, and he would probably prefer to express the ideal relations of Capital and Labour in the terms of a deed of partnership in work and its rewards rather than in any other way, and the practical problem is to discipline this partnership in the terms of the general interest. While he was still at the Board of Trade, he gave much attention to finance. A member of the Cabinet Committee on Finance, he early became one of those who recognise finance as the master of politics and incidentally a dragon across the path of the present Government. So far no one can say whether he is likely to make a success of his office as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Those who began by envying him his promotion, a few months later were pitying him for it—so grave were his tasks.

It is too early to say that he has pieced what he has learned since he entered politics

into a coherent system, but there is no one else among the younger Conservatives who looks like doing it. On him more than on anyone else depends the permanence of an alliance between the new Liberals and the new Conservatives. Already, he seems marked out as the natural successor of Mr. Bonar Law, but one does not see him gaining the undisputed headship of the Conservative Party which was bestowed on Mr. Law by the accidents of intestinal quarrel. As a Conservative pure and simple, he has a future, but not one that will bring out all of which he is capable. If he is to be first Minister in the State—and there are those who think he may be—it will be through a new party formed by fusing the progressive elements that now exist side by side within the Coalition.

LORD READING



Lord Reading.

IV

LORD READING

RUFUS ISAACS was twenty-seven before he found his way to the law. A rebel at school, he presently ran away to sea in the *Blair Athol*, where both romance and indiscipline caught it very badly; and then an office stool in his father's business and stockbroking in turn engaged his romantic inattention.

At the Bar his success was immediate, and at thirty-seven he took silk and was in every case of importance. The contrast between his early unsettlement and his extraordinary brilliancy at the Bar has naturally made people (always anxious to get their famous men conveniently labelled) think of him as a lawyer. But he was never a lawyer in the sense in which Benjamin and Jessel were lawyers, and, though he had many of the qualities of a good judge, it may be doubted whether legal history will put him among the great Lord Chief Justices. He made no law, few of his judgments are likely to be remembered, and at times, for all

his patience and dignity, he has seemed to sit as uneasily on the Judicial Bench as on an office stool. The truth is that he is not a man of science, but a man of affairs. Law to him was a fulcrum of affairs, and though his time had to, his mind never willingly consented to wear its fetters.

To some the spectacle of a man winning reputation and high place in the profession of law and historical fame in other directions is in the nature of an annoying paradox. But there are some minds which cannot be bound even by a profession so exacting and jealous as the law, and Lord Reading's is one of them. Napoleon was a great winner of battles, but he was a statesman with an interest in military affairs rather than a soldier in the narrow professional sense. Similarly, Lord Reading was a great winner of battles in the Courts, but not a lawyer contained and bounded by his profession. The great things in his life are not his conduct of celebrated cases in the Courts, but his advice on finance at the begining of the war, his embassies to the United States, and (one adds it confidently, though it is still in the future) his tenure of the Viceroyalty of India.

It is usual to attribute both his success in commercial cases at the Bar and his mastery of

finance to his experience of commerce before he went to the Bar, but this, after all, was too short to have given him much more than a nodding acquaintance with some of its technicalities. It is one of the foibles of business men that they never attribute any knowledge or command of their affairs by an outsider to the pure qualities of mind, but always to the wrinkles of practical experience, and attention has been concentrated on the few years in which Lord Reading was engaged not over-successfully in business to the neglect of certain commanding qualities of mind which have given him his real distinction. He is, in fact, one of the great intellectuals of our time—none the less an intellectual because his mind has had its exercise not in books, but in affairs.

Every successful lawyer has in a greater or less degree the gift of singling out the essential fact or idea from a mass of details and the power of concentrating on that. Lord Reading has in addition the gift of generalisation, which has always been one of the distinctive gifts of the Jewish race, enabling him to reduce great masses of fact to order and discipline, the same racial instinct for a big simple idea, and immense logical courage. These are formidable gifts; and when they are combined (as they are in his case) with the patience which

notoriously is not characteristic of the Jewish race, with humility in the acquisition of knowledge, and with a singular simplicity and charm of manner, they are quite irresistible gifts.

It is now generally known that the financial policy that saved the country from economic breakdown at the beginning of the war was Lord Reading's. It was not that he alone had the knowledge which others lacked, but that he alone had the courage to insist that his intellectual conviction of what was necessary to prevent a financial crash should be expressed in action. Of all the acts of courage done in the war, the arrangement by which the State, after the moratorium had been proclaimed, agreed to ensure the payment of bills of exchange was perhaps the most remarkable. The liability ran into hundreds of millions; the actual loss was a few thousands at most. This was Lord Reading's doing, and as a supreme example of intellectual courage it is sufficient in itself to ensure him a niche in the fame of the war. At the Bar, when Lord Reading was convinced that a client was wrong, he would advise a settlement with the same confidence whether the amount at stake were a few shillings or hundreds of thousands of pounds. Here was an example of the same splendid courage writ large in national history.

In purely party politics Lord Reading was a child, and he was not successful in the House. It was almost pathetic to contrast the innocence with which he would note up the briefs of party prejudice and controversy, and the mastery with which he would handle specific problems of affairs, whether in his legal or his political work. He was always a genuine and sincere Liberal, and his best speeches were those made on some simple general principle of politics, not those in which he was speaking from a party brief. But though he was a comparative failure on the political platform, in private conference his faculty for plucking the heart out of a subject, his suavity, and his unruffled coolness made him invaluable. It was to these gifts that his missions to America owed their great success. No one did more for Anglo-American friendship in the war, and no one has developed more effectively the old theme of the common law which they share as a bond of union between the two countries. The Bible and Blackstone—on this rock shall they build who work for enduring projects of friendship between England and America.

This vision in finance, and diplomatic skill in adjusting the details of financial and commercial co-operation, take us far from the ordinary ideas of the lawyer. The next step

in Lord Reading's career, the Viceroyalty of India, takes us farther away still. But the conception of law as a science which dries up the marrow and of its practice as the fashioning of thorny verbal bouquets is, after all, mere vulgar prejudice. There is a type of lawyer for whom law is a science, and its practice like a musty monastic penance. But there is another type to whom it is an instrument of political liberty, as it was to Coke and the great common lawyers of Stuart days, a mould into which our glowing aspirations are run to cool and harden. To this second type Lord Reading belongs, and his distinction is a refutation of the common fallacy that a man cannot have both a legal and a practical constructive mind.

It is odd that though England, which owes so much of its liberties to lawyers, should be in danger of forgetting the debt, India should have fallen in love with the prospect of a lawyer-Viceroy. Doubtless with the vast majority of the Indians who have hailed his appointment, the justice that is in his title is his chief attraction, for the man himself and his qualities are unknown to them. But some there are who know the great part that the common law has played in English history in curbing the tyranny of the Executive, and Lord Reading, as several of his speeches have

shown, goes out to India with a passionate faith in law as the great weapon of constitutional progress. It is a great experiment, this mission of Lord Reading's to the East, and none the less romantic because its ideals are clothed in the quiet sober garments of the law. If it succeeds—and the omens are favourable—we may break down part of that barrier which separates the law and the Executive, and a new class of administrators may arise whose experience has been gained in the hard school of the law. The convention which prescribes a judicial cloister as the sanctified close of a life of legal success appeals to some minds, but not to all, and Lord Reading has done much to break it down.

MR. LLOYD GEORGE



Mr. Lloyd George (with Marshal Foch and M. Briand) at Chequers.

V

MR. LLOYD GEORGE

MR. LLOYD GEORGE has been in politics for thirty years, and for nearly fifteen of them has straddled right across the path, so that no one has been able to get past him either way. There is no career in English politics equal to his in variety and acuteness of interest, none so baffling to a fair judgment, and certainly none that has had so magnificent a stage-setting. In one act the Empire is in danger, in a second the British Constitution, and in a third the whole world rocks almost to its fall; twice the millennium expensively dawns; and there are numerous transformation scenes, with one still to come. Nor has human nature's need of refreshment between the acts been entirely overlooked by the management. And throughout it is the personality of Mr. Lloyd George, at times heroic in its proportions, at other times more like Puck, that lends unity to the whole drama. Except him, every other character who was in at the beginning

is either killed, moribund, or pensioned. *Stupor mundi*, he alone remains, and with more right to the title than Barbarossa's grandson ever had.

But he is a Colossus with two strides, not one; and each must be considered separately. On the first stride, history will pronounce him the Welshman who failed to reverse the Norman conquest. On the second, he bestrides not only England, but the world, but one foot is still in suspense, and so is the judgment of history. Unwillingly, an estimate must pay some attention to chronology.

I.—1892–1910

He began as Owen-Glendower in a bowler, bent on reversing old defeats and on winning Home Rule for his beloved Wales, then flushed with a decent Sinn Fein which made of every chapel a miniature city-state, each with its little Pericles and Euripides, inglorious but rarely mute. The chapel was his secondary school, his uncle, David Lloyd, his noblest teacher and friend. Foiled after five years in Parliament in his early ambition to create an Independent Nationalist Party for all Wales with himself as its Parnell, he invaded English politics proper, and most people date at this time the end of his Welsh period. On the

contrary, it lasted at any rate until 1910. During most of these years he was making what boys used to call "transfers" of the Welsh world and its philosophy on to English politics. With him, provinciality was not (as with too many) something to be brushed off, like dust from the boots, but a conqueror's emblem, a bladder to support him on the sea of glory. His agitation against the Boer War reflected the country-bred man's dislike of industrialism and of the power of the purse in politics (a sentiment visible also in the country towns of England at this time), and was the passionate protest from a small nation against overwhelming physical odds, not the expression of any theory about Imperial questions. Wise or not, it did him honour, and he has never since been quite so happy as in these martyr days. It did him service, too, for it earned him a reputation for courage to which he has not always lived up, made him leader of the left wing of the Liberal Party, and gave him that uncanny insight into military realities which he was later to turn to such great national use.

To Wales again and its innocence of the self-sufficiency of bureaucracy must be ascribed his success in his first office as President of the Board of Trade. He actually consulted

business men and workpeople in preparing legislation that affected them, and it was now that the world discovered that the enthusiast, so far from being an extremist, was an arch-accommodator. Welsh temperament again, and the surroundings of his youth, set the key in the revivalist fervour of his campaign of social reform as Chancellor; but though he now became famous, his Chancellorship was the least successful period of his life. Always a man of humanity and genuine democratic instinct, his early attitude towards the land and the landed classes was Welsh rather than English, and though natural and modern enough to the Welsh farmer-nationalist exasperated by the tyranny of an alien or Anglicising aristocracy, it was obsolescent here, or would have been but for the folly of his opponents' tactics. Yet it is characteristic of the man that in the middle of all this bitter controversy he was the one on the Liberal side in the famous conferences of 1910 who was willing to carry compromise farthest. As great a generator of steam as Gladstone, he could cool and condense his own steam as well as Disraeli himself.

When he first, as a very young man, saw the House of Commons, he confessed to his diary that he felt like William eyeing England on his

visit to Edward the Confessor. He did not keep a diary in his Chancellor days, or he might have compared himself to Arthur come back with Excalibur to drive out the Normans; certainly, if there was no Celtic reconquest of England, it was no fault of the Tories, who fought like Harold, with equal valour and stupidity. But there was one distinctively English influence on his politics at this time—that of Chamberlain. The Whiggish end of Liberalism had no interest for him as a Welshman, and always, from a boy onwards, he inclined to Chamberlain and the Radicals. Their views on Home Rule were barely distinguishable; they both had an advanced social policy and curled their lips when they talked of dukes; both, apart from this concession to Radical convention, were realists in temperament. It was an accident that he did not leave Gladstone when Chamberlain did; it was not an accident, but deliberate policy, that set him to do all the things that Chamberlain might have done if he had not gone over, or if, later, Balfour had let him leave the Conservatives and start a new party of his own. They had different objectives, but with both the key to progress was fiscal reform; and though, with the one, this meant taxation through the Customs and, with the other, taxation through

the Excise, there was otherwise not much between them. For Lloyd George was no more a Free-trader by conviction than he was a Protectionist. Political theories and half the so-called principles of party were to him only the fossils of history, which men in spectacles might tap with their hammers, but were not to be allowed to interfere with the romantic enjoyment of the scenery. It was like the man that he should have been dissatisfied even with the cataclysmic Liberal victory in the elections of 1906, and should have insisted that rival social legislation based on a rival fiscal reform was necessary to make good the ground won. These were the subjects he was really interested in; on such matters as naval armaments and our relations with Germany he took a strong line, but did not think for himself. He adopted the handiest views from his Liberal associates, usually from the naval economists, because he wanted the money to finance his own policy, but on occasion, as in the celebrated speech in 1911, from Sir Edward Grey. The war brought no solution in the continuity of his political development. It only changed the conditions.

II.—1910–1918

To what did Lloyd George owe his power? Not to electoral infallibility, for by no means

all his political campaigns were successful. His early Welsh Home Rule scheme ran aground on the fact that there are two Waleses as there are two Irelands; and after the first election in 1910, he rightly regarded the finance of his social policy as beaten and was only too glad that the Lords had presented him with the constitutional issue. Not to his oratory, for, despite some war speeches of lyrical perfection, and some admirable recent examples of lucid exposition, he is not in the apostolic succession of English oratory. An incomparable actor, a spell-binder, a perfect conductor of electrical discharge, a crowd-compeller and master of mass-psychology, but not a builder of stately argument nor a sculptor in words of ideals of such mental and moral beauty that all who hear must forsake everything else and follow them. Nor to intellectual equipment, though this was much greater than is commonly supposed. The whole world was Mr. Lloyd George's school, and he never ceased learning; but he suffered from the lack of the early mental discipline, without which a man rarely attains the great virtue of intellectual patience. Mr. Lloyd George has the quickest mind in politics, but it is impatient of detail, incapable of avoiding a short cut, and prone to the skimble-skamble when he is not interested.

He trips over his own nimbleness. And as he grew older, his respect for the expert, for storied learning, and for the artistry and craftsmanship of life grew less and less, his faith in extemporisation, in power of "rigging" and "fixing up" anything grew more and more. He is one of the few Englishmen who believed that machinery in politics, as in industry, is only made to be scrapped.

Nor, again, did he make his way by the sheer force of character like that moral Behemoth, Gladstone.

He is very human, amiably so as a rule, but not always. He draws his refreshing drink from springs that are pure, but the wells of politics are situate in muddy and trampled fields, and some of his people often have noticeably dirty boots. He avoids Gladstone's mistake of leaving human nature out of account, but tactics, at any rate since his rupture with the official Liberals, have had too great an influence on his policy. He is Welsh in his desire to please, and in his power to put himself at another's point of view, and for that reason he will both talk down to a very low common measure of intelligence in a crowd, and talk up to the views of one who is seeing him privately, and this last will often go away leaping for joy to have found his spiritual

affinity, whereas before he is many yards away Mr. Lloyd George may be exhibiting the same power of charm and understanding to one who holds exactly the opposite views. Some call it duplicity; rather is it the vacillation of the water-diviner's rod. In public and private utterances he exhibits the same combination of simplicity and subtlety—simplicity in the general aim and proposition, subtlety in the choice of the particular instances and of the means for the fulfilment of his desire. Neither social rank nor reputation makes any difference to his estimate of a man, and he always judges for himself. Flouting the conventions, but extremely sensitive to criticism; despising the forms and ceremonies of high place, but a lover of power who can at times be Napoleonic in his decisions; his genius for understanding others has often, by raising false hopes, encouraged misunderstanding of himself. He is as often the victim of his own charm as the exploiter of it.

No, the distinctive gift, which has made him the greatest natural genius for politics in our history, is his realistic unveiling vision, which enables him to see parties and situations, as it were, in cross-section, to observe the Tory subsoil in which the giants of the Liberal forest have their roots, and to detect the Radical

inside in pillars of the Tory faith. This power of seeing unity in differences and differences in unity constitutes his wizardry in conference. He is at once an explosive of party union and a builder of flying bridges between incompatibles. In fact, he is a born coalitionist.

As long ago as 1910 he had the idea of coalition. Why not? He was on the modern side and had no reverence for the classic traditions of party; as a young Welshman, he cared nothing for either except in so far as it could serve Wales. And when he became naturalised in English politics he retained this very wholesome view of party as a servant, not a master; as a realist, he knew that the hideous masks and stinkpots of party controversies, which he himself used with such effect, had little to do with facts, and still less with conviction or efficiency. In 1910, this keen rationalism was in advance of the times, but the war made coalition not only possible but necessary, and luckily it brought Mr. Lloyd George to the head of affairs. There has been a vast amount of controversy on whether he was or was not personally loyal to Mr. Asquith in 1915 and at the end of 1916. But, if it is agreed (and it generally is) that to win the war it was necessary that Mr. Asquith should go and Mr. Lloyd George succeed him, personal

loyalty might have been indulged to the extent of becoming public vice, and there is no question save whether the substitution was done decently. It was.

It would be almost impossible to praise Mr. Lloyd George's qualities as a war Prime Minister too highly. It brought out the pure gold of his genius, as those who knew him in 1900 might have predicted that it would. His realism in war was like a gift from heaven. He had more strategy in his little finger than the average general in his whole body; he was the first to discover that industry at home was the army at the base, and to act upon his discovery; and (except, perhaps, for a few moments in 1917) he never lost faith in our victory, and inspired others with his faith and with his works. These things should not be forgotten, nor shall we be allowed to forget them. What is much more easily forgotten is that these war virtues are the same qualities that we disliked or admired (according to fancy) in Mr. Lloyd George before the war.

What, then, makes the difference between their efficacy in war and their comparative inefficacy before and since? Inefficacy before, for apart from the Insurance Act (passed after 1910), how much pure spirit remains from the distillations of those social reform days, and

who knows whether Mr. Lloyd George is not the severest critic of his controversial methods in that period, and how far his affection for Coalition is not the repentance of the morning's headaches? Inefficacy after, for at the highest valuation of the work of the Coalition, it is obviously in its present shape not a permanent instrument either of union or progress. There are those who explain everything that they do not understand in affairs by the theory of some deflation of moral earnestness. It will not do in this case, for Mr. Lloyd George now works harder than ever, and no man has ever been so faithful to his upbringing as he to Llanystumdwy.

The explanation is that Mr. Lloyd George neither is nor was Liberal or Conservative, but is now as before the typical Radical.[1] In ordinary times the Radical stands midway between the parties, having points of contact with both, but belonging to neither. Usually, though not always, he works with the Liberals, but often he goes over to the Conservative Party. It was a Radical Disraeli who rescued the old Tory Party from utter ruin, and converted it into the Conservative Party; it was another Radical Chamberlain who, after the Home Rule split, made a new school of British

[1] See the observations on the use of this term on p. 127.

Imperialism and Protection, and was for a time the dominating influence in the Tory Party counsels; it was a third Radical, Lloyd George, who contributed the driving force to the Liberal Party in 1906 and succeeding years, but who has *not* yet gone over to the Conservative Party. His success during the war was due to the fact that war superseded party distinctions, and produced in the minds of most Englishmen just that indifference to party names to which Mr. Lloyd George was born. He was able in the war to stand as his own Radical self, the first Radical in our history who ever done so in high place. Before the war he failed partly because of his own immaturity, partly because he was not in his own camp. Nor has he been in his own camp since the war. Perhaps the chief obstacle to an understanding of his political character is the idea, very prevalent amongst Liberals, that the war made him a pervert and extinguished his reformer's fires. He would not have been human if the war had left him unchanged, but the real cleavage of his life came in 1910, not in 1914. In 1910, so far from being at the pinnacle of his career, he was perilously near to failure, and it was then that he discovered that the frontal attack was not the last word in political wisdom. It was he who made the

suggestion to the new King which led to the constitutional conference, and at that conference he discovered how much he had in common with the men of other parties. From that moment he was a Coalitionist. "Men quarrel too much," he has been heard to say. "They become slaves to words and phrases. They miss the reality." Oh, words of wisdom.

For Lloyd George, the Radical, has points of contact with both Liberal and Conservative Parties; so has every other Radical. It is a toss-up whether the Radical goes one way or the other—a toss-up from the Radical's point of view—a tragedy when one thinks how different the history of the country might have been if Gladstone had not shed Chamberlain, and Asquith had not been seduced into conflict with Lloyd George. And yet even the most successful revolting Radical, too, has his sorrows. At a time of life when monogamic bliss yields the solid blessings, he finds himself distracted amid a seraglio of affinities.

III.—1918–21

Mr. Lloyd George vigorously resisted the policy which led to the war, and but for the German invasion of Belgium, he would have left the Government along with Lord Morley and Mr. John Burns. But, once in the war,

he showed himself the true Radical in allowing no party principles or prejudices to stand between the country and victory. As the war approached its end—and the end came very suddenly—he had to consider what his future political allegiance should be, and it was natural that he should decide to continue the Coalition. The single command and the single front which was, perhaps, his greatest contribution to victory, the suggestions for compromise between the parties at the Conference of 1910, and the idea of coalition on a single domestic front to solve the problems of peace—have we not here the same logical idea throughout, varying only in its application? And here is the real, the mature Lloyd George. He could not have decided differently than he did, but, in fact, the decision was taken out of his hands. For it has been said and has not been contradicted that the election of 1918 was originally designed to ask for a mandate to finish the war, which was expected to last till 1919, and, the war finishing earlier than was expected, it had hurriedly to be adapted to the purposes of peace.

It was a terribly difficult task that awaited him at the conclusion of hostilities, and the extravagant expectations of peace that four years' war had produced in men's minds, and too sanguine and ill-considered election

promises, made complete success in his task impossible of achievement. A whole world of foreign policy lay in ruins and had to be reconstructed afresh; two flatly opposing conceptions of peace—the French and the American—had to be reconciled with each other and with our own. It was so long since any attention had been given to the finance of international trade that its few simple laws had been forgotten. On the top of all that, the old party landmarks had been obliterated and needed to be marked out afresh. The intolerance of the straight-jacket of party, the realist's impatience with the hollow phrases of party controversy, the ambition to state the problems of national life in new and truer forms—these had been the notes of Mr. Lloyd George's political life, and people had high hopes of what he might accomplish. To endow our politics with these qualities would be an even greater achievement than victory in the war, and (men thought) would make the natural climax of his tortuous but not inconsistent political life. Had Mr. Lloyd George accomplished a tithe of the popular hopes of peace, he would have been the greatest man of all time. Yet he might have done more had he realised his own power and indulged his genius more confidently. He was

the one man in our history, and 1918 the one year in which he was free to form a Coalition after his own heart. The idea of coalition was right, for without coalition there can be no practical politics now. Mr. Lloyd George, in 1910, saw even farther into the future than he knew.

Nor is it that this coalition has not done things that neither Liberal nor Conservative Party could possibly have done singly with the other in Opposition. Let all these things be conceded with full measure. What, then, has gone wrong? The mistake was that the Coalition was formed on too wide a basis. Coalition, if it is to be more than a stop-gap until a crisis is passed, must at any rate be an organic unity, drawn from men of several parties, but with a common philosophy of politics or, at any rate, united by something more than a willingness to sit on the same benches. But this Coalition, as Mr. Lloyd George said of the Allies after the Rapallo Conference, is not a unity, but a mere stitching together of half a dozen interests and sets of ideas—the old bureaucracy represented by Mr. Austen Chamberlain; the new bureaucracy (child born out of wedlock of social policy and the war) represented by Sir Eric Geddes and Dr. Addison; the progressive realists by Sir Robert Horne and a group of young Coalition-

ists; the Conservative idealists by the back-bench Cecilians; the merely stupid interests and the merely sharp; and the two machines, of which the one that is supposed to be in efficient working order is becoming every day less Coalitionist and more Tory. And the sole bond of unity that holds these elements together is Mr. Lloyd George, without a capable lieutenant of his own school, with the exception of Sir Robert Horne, for Sir Gordon Hewart speaks a different idiom, and Mr. Churchill is not so much a member of the Government as an independent principality. No wonder the seams began to start. The clear-cut decisions for which Mr. Lloyd George was famous became for sometime so blurred that they were unrecognisable. His Russian policy was a shrewd divination of the popular mind and of historical reality; and it might, had it been pursued consistently from the first, have had all the measure of success that usually rewards fidelity to a clear logical idea. But it was so presented, owing to the necessity of carrying at any rate the nominal assent of his colleagues, that its enemies hated it the more for its disguise, its friends could not recognise it for its disguise, and anyhow it came cold to the table. So with the Government's Irish policy, which until recently was a

bad mixture of political shrewdness with incompetence and malice in administration, like the sea god Glaucus (to adapt the Platonic simile), whose original image can hardly be discerned because his natural members are broken and crushed and damaged by the waves, and incrustations have grown over them of seaweed and shells and stones, so that he is more like some monster than he is to his natural form. And so in many, though not all, departments of policy, not because the Government is a Coalition, but because the Coalition is what it is, a compendium of most parties past and present, not the party of the future and men's hope. And the absence of unity in the meantime exaggerates the political vices to which Mr. Lloyd George is prone. His gift of accommodation degenerates into ambiguity, his originality into a fitful tyranny and a system of personal rule. He is a hawk that can no longer swoop, but must flutter like a bat amongst the Tory rafters.

How has so great a master of political tactics brought himself to this pass? Partly because of the conditions under which the 1918 election was held. Partly because Mr. Lloyd George has had so much work that he has had little time to think. Partly lack of courage or exaggerated respect for the machinery of

party. But the main cause was that the Coalition was too broad, too comprehensive. He believed rightly in a combination of parties; but he opened the door so wide that he admitted those whose lack of sympathy destroyed the unity of the Coalition, aroused the slumbering spirit of faction, and in the resultant vacillation reflected discredit on the leader. For the churches have done their work much better than the schools, and in sheer inability to understand intellectual problems that might well baffle genius and learning, men fall back on their restatement in moral terms which they can understand, and think they can resolve. Thus every baffling political quadratic instantly becomes with these critics a simple issue of right and wrong; every surd in diplomatic algebra is a proof of a moral twist; every partial solution of a world-wide problem is sure sign of depravity. Mr. Lloyd George has suffered from this facile moralistic criticism. If one-half the energy devoted to moral denunciation had been given to intellectual appreciation of his difficulties, the problems might by now have been nearer solution.

The Radical-minded man who aspires to unite factions for national ends has many pitfalls. One is Cæsarism (for the great Julius himself was a Radical, and as a sympathiser

with the revolutionary Communism of Catiline, the founder of the Roman Empire had a past far more lurid than the land-tax period of Mr. Lloyd George). This danger took with Mr. Lloyd George the exceedingly mild form of looking over Lord Curzon's shoulder at the Foreign Office, and appointing a Minister of Transport. A second pitfall is Conservatism, for Conservatism welcomes Radicals because it thinks from past experience that it can transform them into its own. Here Mr. Lloyd George is in danger, but so far he has avoided the fate of his predecessors, Disraeli and Chamberlain, and he, not they, has so far done most of the transforming. A third pitfall is ambiguity, which compromises both sides, and here Mr. Lloyd George has certainly not escaped reproach. But the test is in the end, and the end is not yet. Dublin and Washington may yet be his salvation—

Via prima salutis
Quod minime reris, Graia pandetur ab urbe.

Any policy would have drawn converging fire of attack; and open order and mobile manœuvring may have been the only way to reduce casualties.

But as time goes on—and time is of the essence in the politics of Coalition—the need for concentration which sheds irreconcilable elements becomes more urgent.

Ever since the Coalition was formed, well-meaning people have been offering directions to him, but the wise voices were those that called "Left," "Left," for, contrary to what Mr. Lloyd George himself imagined two years ago, the immediate future is not with Labour nor with Toryism, but with some form of Liberalism. He is now like a man riding two horses that are straining apart. His future, clearly, is in a combination of progressive Conservatism and Liberalism with the right wing of Labour. As a Conservative Prime Minister, he would be naught. An orthodox Liberal he never has been nor will be. Labour is still too unformed and inchoate in its views to attract a leader from without. There are those who have suggested that the wisest course may be for the Prime Minister to rest awhile from labours whose continuous strain has been almost greater than human endurance, in the expectation of returning refreshed with new ideas and strength. One does not see Mr. Lloyd George following that advice. But the alternative is a movement to the left, if not this year, then not later than next. Certain it is that, unless he escapes from the toils of pure Tory Party faction that are gathering round him, he will for the rest of his days be a blind Samson in the house of the Philistines.

LORD CURZON



[*Elliott & Fry*.

Lord Curzon of Kedleston.

VI

LORD CURZON

THERE is no aristocracy left but ours capable of throwing up men like Lord Curzon, who assume rule over others like a cross of duty, and practise the duty like a vice. He is an extreme case even in his own class. Love of power for gain, or for the sake of some idea with which one is bursting, or to impress one's neighbours, is common enough, but these were not his motives.

"I have only five years," he said when he became Viceroy of India. "For such a task every year seems a minute, every minute a second; one might almost say that there is hardly time to begin." Here is love of power for its own sake, perhaps, but no vulgar lust; rather, a passion of service that is almost a religion, a passion the more remarkable because he is by nature cold, neither has he any single overmastering idea of his own which he desires to impose. It is the ardour of a medieval prelate interpreting the ways of the immortals to men, magnificently ascetic,

haughtily humble. For, haughty vicegerent as he was, Lord Curzon was deeply humble before the ideal of the *pax Britannica* in Asia which he served. The nobility that obliges a man to wander over all Asia, to study deep, and to work twice as hard as any of his assistants is something that the British aristocracy may well be proud of.

It is said to have been some glowing words of Sir James FitzJames Stephen heard at Eton that kindled the enthusiasm of Lord Curzon for Asia. Certainly it possessed him early and never left him. There is a ridiculous story about how certain people belonging to different nations set about writing a treatise on the elephant. The Russian shut himself up in a room with a million cigarettes, and at the end of a year produced a book entitled *The Elephant: Does he Exist?* The Pole interviewed all the chancelleries and newspaper offices in Europe and finally produced a massive tome on the *Elephant and the Polish Question.* The Frenchman published a charming book on *l'Elephant et ses Amours.* But the Englishman went to where elephants live wild, and finally produced a bashful ten-page brochure of *Hints on the Methods of Capturing Elephants.* Except in his lack of bashfulness, Lord Curzon was true to type. His enthusiasm for the East

took the characteristically English form of determining to see and learn everything about it for himself. He climbed the Pamirs, visited the Court of Afghanistan, wandered in Persia, and wrote a great book about it which has every quality but charm, studied Russian methods in Central Asia, French in Cochin-China, and the Japanese at home, and came back to English politics with a fervent belief in the sacredness and grandeur of the British mission in Asia. Some travellers—Sir Mark Sykes, for example—when they go to Asia fall in love with one of its ancient civilisations, and return with a burning desire to restore it; others, such as Burton and Lawrence, dye their whole minds in the gorgeous romance of the East; others, like Kinglake of "Eöthen," love the East with their eyes, never with their minds. But Lord Curzon travelled the East like a naturalist in politics, and returned with an unrivalled collection of specimens illustrating the science of government, each tribe and place duly desiccated and transfixed with a pin awaiting the benevolent study of the British Raj.

He went to the Foreign Office under Lord Salisbury, for whom he had a great reverence, and was an efficient and highly unpopular Parliamentary Under-Secretary. But the

Foreign Office was only a waiting-room for him. He had every qualification that knowledge and study could give him for the highest post in Asia; character, too, enormous industry, and an intellectual conscientiousness as sensitive to a mistake as to a scandal. Above all, he had the loftiest ideal of Imperial duty. He became Viceroy of India at thirty-nine, and the country was proud to send a Viceroy with so many qualifications. At last an expert was called to government. Wonderful!

There was not a department of Indian Government in which the new Viceroy did not make his influence felt. He arrived after an unfortunate frontier war in which more British troops had been engaged than ever fought under Wellington, and he made a settlement of the frontier problem that disappointed the forward school, and therein showed its wisdom; he screwed up the efficiency of the Civil Service by his celebrated order cutting down the length and the frequency of written reports; he recognised merit and obscure hard work; he insisted on equal justice between Indians and Europeans—*rex Jupiter omnibus idem.* There is no end to the catalogue of good and useful things that he did. Even the partition of Bengal, which made him so unpopular, was inspired by very good reasons, and

should have made for greater administrative efficiency.

And yet when all is said the Viceroyalty was the end of an old epoch, and it was reserved for others to begin the new. The very virtues of his government threw into bolder relief the discovery that even in the East the days were gone by when any people will be content to let any other play the part of an earthly providence to them. Campbell-Bannerman's saying that most people preferred to be self-governed rather than well-governed was not so violent a paradox after all, and it holds—applied with reason—even in Asia. If it appears strange that a man of Lord Curzon's ability should live in Asia for years and read everything that anyone had ever written about it, and still escape a truth that another man spots between a bite of muffin and a cup of tea, it is only one of the proofs of the limitations of the expert with which politics abound. How very different the modern history of India might have been if one-half the toil that he gave to the improvement of the efficiency of English Government in India had been given to preparing the Indian people to govern themselves!

No one went to India from England knowing so much as Lord Curzon; yet of the new chapters in the British history of Asia, one was

begun by a very Western Liberal, Lord Morley, another by a doctrinaire Jew, yet another by Mark Sykes and a handful of British officers, a fourth, in Egypt, by Lord Milner, and yet a fifth chapter, that in Palestine, by one of the Cecil family. From Lord Curzon nothing new, nothing of the future. Indian Imperialism, in fact, ended with his Viceroyalty, or rather would have done if some of it had not escaped and run amok in Mesopotamia. For one thing, the part of earthly providence is one that demands limitless resources, which we have not got; for another, we now realise how much finer and rarer a thing it is in politics to make a nation that will govern itself. Much the finest achievement of England abroad has been the making of the self-governing Dominions; we are now attempting the more difficult task of educating alien races to commonwealth status.

In the home politics to which he returned after his Viceroyalty, Lord Curzon's judgments are well meaning, but amateurish and shallow. In the constitutional agitation over the Lords he was indistinguishable from the ruck except for the greater dignity of his phrasing, and he adopted the Chamberlain view of our fiscal policy and of our relations with the Dominions without understanding the psychology of a

working-man either here or in the Dominions. When he took part in a North Country election, he was caricatured sitting on the back of an elephant coming down a narrow street and scattering the plain citizens, and to this day he has never quite got rid of the durbar manner.

He is heard at his best in the House of Lords, but even that is liable at any moment to become a gilded howdah swaying in time with his stately tread. Or (to change the longitude of the metaphor) the peers, when he speaks, are made to experience the inconvenience of tenants trying to hold conversation on foot with the squire mounted on the back of a horse which persists in turning in a circle. He is one of the most exact speakers in politics; he has historical imagination, and conveys as few others can do a sense of the material and moral greatness of the British Empire; he is audible, too. But he is also the schoolmaster of the House, and that not quite in the sense in which the word was used of ancient Athens, but in the less flattering sense of one who awards marks and gives impositions. With the big boys he gets on well enough; but idealogues, Liberals, seers of visions, and the whole brood of intuitionists in politics are definitely in his lower school. And in his relations with any democracy, whether of voters or of Glasgow

students, there will always supervene some period of huffiness and injured dignity.

He succeeded Mr. Balfour at the Foreign Office, but, as the real head of the Foreign Office is the Prime Minister, Lord Curzon has had very little chance to show his quality. He has a reverence for an accomplished fact even of the political hierarchy, and he is very loyal to the fixed and settled policy of the Government. But he initiates nothing, and if he did, would probably be overruled, for he is not in possession of the keys to the new heaven. He is said to obstruct and to have opposed the Egyptian scheme of Lord Milner, and doubtless also the transfer of Egypt (if this had been arranged) to the Colonial Office along with the rest of the Middle East. But his main duty at the Foreign Office is to give precision and definiteness to sketchy outlines of policy and dress the resultant figure in the Foreign Office toga. This he does very well, but there is not the making of a great Foreign Office Secretary in it. Perhaps he would do greater service as a critic than as an agent of foreign policy.

In his matchless sense of form, in the perfect command of the *lingua franca* that a classical education teaches, in his learning and deep respect for concrete fact, and in his sense of

the greatness of our mission in the world no less than in his definite political views, Lord Curzon belongs to other times. He is a Whig strayed from his fellows, hastening weary but open-minded to catch up to his age and never quite succeeding. He has no future in this generation, but the next will probably recognise in him the last representative of a great order, and will be inclined to put him much higher than this generation does.

MR. ASQUITH



[*P.P.A.*

MR. AND MRS. ASQUITH.

VII

MR. ASQUITH

A SOUND Yorkshire stock gave him health, his first marriage help, his second fashion and society, but Oxford made Mr. Asquith what he has been and still is. Time has brought him no changes except of political rank, and no real rise or fall, for power is in the man himself, not in his office, and, in a sense, Mr. Asquith has just as much (and just as little) power now as when he was Prime Minister.

There is an aristocracy of education as well as of birth. Like all aristocracies, it is distracted by feuds, but each faction has its own idiom of thought and expression, repeating itself in its adherents like a Hapsburg nose or a Cavendish jaw, a pride more intense than any that birth knows, an imposing façade that it turns towards the world and an interior that it is fain to keep guarded against indiscretion. Mr. Asquith belonged to the most famous of these cliques—the Balliol of Jowett, the saintly worldling. So, too, did Lords Curzon, Grey,

and Milner; but whereas they brought to Oxford characters formed by other influences, Asquith brought little but a sound constitution and a white sheet of paper; and Balliol wrote upon it nearly the whole man.

The Prime Minister of later years is the former Balliol scholar, looking larger and feeling smaller; the speeches in which Mr. Asquith knew so well how to express the mind of a nation in stately and sonorous phrase are the old Latin prose exercises retranslated into English and furnished with modern instances; the working of democratic institutions is the Oxford examination schools again with eccentric examiners; distortion and exaggeration of political sentiment are howlers grown up, more hateful than ever to the scholar, to whom exactness, balance, avoidance of excess, are the master intellectual virtues. Mr. Asquith through life is always the prize scholar in politics.

The scholar's honour, his justice of heart and mind, and his proud shyness are great possessions to carry through life, but they are not a complete equipment for politics. He needs an inner force to drive and create, or some strong influence from without, if he is to mould events. Scholarship tends to be barren, or, if it has kittens, it usually eats them out of

shyness. It makes minds like clocks, finished pieces of mechanism, but useless till they are wound up, and sometimes, perversely, it forgets to provide a keyhole. These last are the men—some of them of unrivalled mental attainments—who are never afterwards heard of. With Mr. Asquith politics was the keyhole, but others did the winding—first Gladstone, then Lord Grey and Lord Haldane, then Mr. Lloyd George, and now, they say, sometimes Mr. Pringle.

A story is told of a consultation between counsel at the close of the Parnell Commission, when Mr. Asquith was asked by Lord Russell what he should say next day. Mr. Asquith began to sketch an admirable summary of the points in the evidence, when Lord Russell, who had good reason to respect his intellectual calibre, broke out impatiently, "Asquith, I am ashamed of you; *I* shall talk the history of Oireland." The spare relevancy, so becoming to the scholar, breaks down at moments of crisis. In genius there is always a tangential quality. The lack of it has been Mr. Asquith's great limitation, for without it there can be no creative power, and he has none.

When Mr. Asquith moves out of the penumbra of Gladstone he is a Liberal Imperialist in close association with Lord Grey and Lord

Haldane, and at issue both with the official leader of the party and with the great majority of the followers too. That Mr. Asquith should have identified himself with the minority in this way may have been due to a miscalculation of forces, but more probably was the expression of an instinctive preference. He is constitutionally averse from extremes, and the logic of left-wing Liberalism, even if he had not had faith in the essential sanity of British Imperialism abroad as an instrument of liberty, doubtless offended a nature at once tolerant and exact. But his modern relations with Mr. Lloyd George are not to be understood unless it is remembered that he was for long in revolt against Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. When Sir Henry died, Mr. Asquith was chosen to be the new Prime Minister, but his views on some subjects, and still more his critical and unenthusiastic temperament, divided him from the majority of his party. He was the titular head, but he held office like a constitutional monarch by following his Prime Minister—in this case Mr. Lloyd George.

Thus early was formed the habit which made him a failure in war—the habit of regarding his office as that of an arbitrator, whose chief duty was to compose differences and maintain unity within the party. He did not impose

his own will on the Cabinet, but was the resultant of forces within it. In the sham fights of party warfare, that was well enough; but, when real war came, the nation insisted on a leader, not on a chairman of committees, and it got Mr. Lloyd George, who had just the qualities that Mr. Asquith had not. It would be unfair not to add that on Mr. Asquith fell the responsibility of war for its first and longer half, and that he sustained the burden, if not with success, at any rate with singular dignity and with the most sensitive regard for national honour. There are some speeches of Mr. Asquith's made towards the beginning of the war that every Englishman would take an oath upon, as on a Bible, so pure is their patriotism, so compact of justice their expression. He was not leading; but sometimes he interpreted as no one has done before or since.

It would be one of the paradoxes of politics, were not this sort of thing always happening, that Mr. Lloyd George, twelve years ago the hope of the stern unbending Radicals, should now be the mediator and compromiser, and Mr. Asquith the old Liberal Leaguer, the leader of the forlorn hopes of the old official Liberalism. And the paradox is more violent still when it is remembered that Mr. Lloyd George was the chief enemy of entanglement in the affairs of

Europe almost up to the last. In 1914 there were many subjects of disagreement between them, and they sat side by side; now there are few and they sit in opposition. Mr. Asquith is singularly free from the vices of the mean and ungenerous nature. He forgives easily, at any rate he would if left to himself, and he never allows personal ambition to stand between him and the sun of duty whose warmth he so enjoys. Yet he is leader of the Opposition when, on nine subjects out of ten, his convictions are on the Ministerial side. He does it badly in consequence. Why should they have changed the places which ten years ago everyone would have predicted that they would now have been occupying in a Coalition? Mainly because Conservatism has lived for generations on its Radical recruits, but cannot get on with the Whigs, however close their views may be.

Mr. Asquith used to be reproached with being a trimmer. Perhaps he is, in tactics; but his convictions are viscous rather than fluid, and he has the greatest difficulty in modifying them. His Irish policy, for example, is a mere ghost of the Gladstonian controversies and stands in no sort of relation with changed political conditions. He cannot turn a political position, and the strange spectacle is witnessed

of a statesman constitutionally averse from extremes drawing out the Gladstonian ideas on Ireland to impossible lengths rather than reconstruct a new policy of reform out of the old elements. His politics are too concerned with forms, not enough with realities. He occupies, in fact, much the same relation to Progressive forces as the Cecils to those of Conservatism; like theirs, all his instincts are aristocratic, though, in his case, it is an aristocracy of mind. His obstinacy, his rigid intellectual honesty, and his strict truthfulness have never been more conspicuous than since his arrival in the present Parliament; and, in some ways, he seems a more admirable figure on the front Opposition bench now, squeezed in between the unyielding Mr. Adamson and the more elastic Mr. Hogge, than when he was Prime Minister. Then he recited prize compositions from a rostrum of Wait and See; now he is in a false position on the floor, but maintains, by his very ineffectiveness as a party leader, his reputation for honesty.

He does not like the present House, nor does it like him, and one reason is that he has never made a serious attempt to understand it. When Mr. Balfour came back after his defeat in 1906, his first speech in a House that for the most part knew his name only was a failure,

and he sat down for some months of silence to learn its peculiarities. Mr. Asquith has never paid this House that compliment, but if he did, he would have a similar reward to Balfour's. Better still would it have been if Mr. Asquith had not sat on the Liberal front Opposition bench, but on the cross-benches, where his influence would have been greater and he could have been wholly himself. And he would have been nearer to the Cecil group, an alliance with whom seems to be the natural destiny of the variety of Liberalism for which Mr. Asquith stands. His hatred for the new bureaucracy, his genuine zeal for economy, his individualism, are all points of contact with the group. Their philosophy of politics is much the same, and their specific differences are falling off, one after the other, for lack of nourishment.

It is usual nowadays to shed tears over Mr. Asquith, and even to read moral sermons over his career. But there is no obvious reason for treating him like a Decline and Fall. His success has not been below his abilities, and a man who was at the head of affairs in the first half of the war, whatever his faults may have been, may one day walk with Pitt in Elysium. The sensitiveness and reserve with which he himself would wish to hide the life that is his own is worthy of admiration and ought to

have been respected more than it has been. Intellectual men all have their sharp reactions, and it is the chief fault in his philosophy that it gives too much room in life to pure intellect, and so makes for a stronger reaction which has sometimes puzzled his more straight-laced admirers. But in public affairs his personal character has often shown nobility, and has always been pure from the grosser and meaner motives.

MR. BONAR LAW



Mr. Bonar Law (with Lord Carson).

VIII

MR. BONAR LAW

OH, sheer patient hulk of the British Conservative Party, always aground under its home-bred captains, and bumping its invulnerable ribs against the flowing tide, wind and water tight only under borrowed captains and crews!

First it is Disraeli, the Radical[1] from the East, who gets the stranded craft afloat, and navigates it into strange waters in quest of the Conservative working-man; then the ex-Radical, Joseph Chamberlain, rediscovering the British Empire; and after him Mr. Bonar Law, *fidus Achates* to the reputed worst Radical of them all, and brought all the way from Canada to take command of the ship. For

[1] Radical throughout these essays is used in the sense that the word has in England, not in America. In America, a Radical is a Social Revolutionary, who manages to keep out of gaol only by calling himself a Liberal. But in England, Radical was (and still is) a title of honour which the left wing of Liberals like to assume to themselves. He is a man who rejects, for good and for evil, the Whig traditions of the Liberal Party; and on that account has often found it easier to co-operate with the Conservatives than with the official Liberals.

Mr. Bonar Law, too, though a genuine Conservative and attached to the party in a sense in which Disraeli and Chamberlain never were, is still not native to it. He never warmed a proprietorial back at the *arae et foci* of the party, and in his aloofness from its older traditions he might still be in Canada. By comparison with Lord Long, or even with Mr. Austen Chamberlain, he is the newest of men, and that in a party which still likes to think of itself as of the soil, racy. But though the latest to be imposed, his authority, until his breakdown at the beginning of 1921, was never seriously challenged. The old stock patiently bears the fruit of its latest graft *miraturque novas frondes et non sua poma*—

> Thus pears and quinces from the crabtree come ;
> And thus the ruddy cornel bears the plum.

Yet one recognises how inevitable, after all, the succession in leadership was from Disraeli to Bonar Law. Disraeli found the Tories the party of a faction humiliated with defeat, torn with secession, and destined, so it seemed, to an early and unhonoured death. He made it once more a living and national party, and found for it millions of unsuspected allies in the electorate, and all that on the condition which seemed to many at the time the merest

trifle—that it ceased to be a Tory and became the Conservative Party. When, after the Cecilian interregnum, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain became a member of the party, it was no longer Conservative and had become Unionist, and again the change of name concealed a revolution. The new party became a party of advanced social reform; the breath of romance which Disraeli had found on the Hindu Kush, Chamberlain rediscovered in the illimitable veld, and in a material age it was none the less refreshing to most people for blowing across a gold reef; and finally there came the Tariff Reform proposals, uniting the squirearchy of the country and the factory, and proposing to rewrite Conservatism in the terms of a new political economy and of a new Imperial unity.

Mr. Chamberlain had a genius for friendship, and no one was ever more loyal to colleagues and chief than he. Of a warmer and more impetuous nature, he was certainly fonder of Mr. Balfour than Mr. Balfour was of him. But he captured the imagination of the party as Disraeli had done before him, and as Mr. Lloyd George captured that of the Liberals later, and it was inevitable that the lieutenant should become the real leader of the party. Before the hot breath of the new Protection, coming as from the mouth of a furnace, the

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influence of Mr. Balfour in the party counsels shrivelled and fell. It was now that Mr. Bonar Law came into prominence. He entered Parliament in the khaki election of 1900, and when the Tariff Reform controversy was joined he found himself in a temperature that exactly suited him. Mr. Chamberlain became a Tariff Reformer as it were by accident, because he was keen on Imperial union. Mr. Bonar Law seems to have been born one. Mr. Chamberlain invented his arguments to illustrate his theory, but with Mr. Law figures and theory had grown up together inextricably intertwined. Very soon he was known as the only man who could argue the case really well, and the waistcoat pocket from which he drew the relevant figures and the damaging quotation became a legendary dungeon of Tariff Reform lore.

It is easy to under-estimate the highly specialised gifts that Mr. Bonar Law revealed at this time, and doubtless at any other time they would have carried him nothing like so far. English politics from 1903 onwards were one vast sea of statistics, on which Mr. Bonar Law bobbed up and down like a cork, and alone never got a ducking. But his opportune ability to handle figures was the sign, not the whole, of his power. He is sometimes taken as

the representative business man in politics. Nothing of the kind, for the typical modern business man is a man either of powerful imagination or of wishy-washy sentiment, and he has neither. He stands rather for the Northern passion for argument. In the South people never argue with each other; they are content to say what they think, to diffuse the appropriate temperamental aura about what they say, and if that does not persuade they give it up. But in the North argumentation is a passion. Opinions really are changed by the turning and twisting of words, and an argument with which a man disagrees is not something to shrug his shoulders at, but to hit on the head if he can. It is the difference between an evangelical and a ceremonial religion.

This passion for argumentation is the permanent and distinguishing quality in Mr. Bonar Law. When he comes into the House he looks the plain, kind-hearted, decent man, dressed as though for kirk. The eyes are wide open and shy; the manner, when his critics are talking, is the blend of deference and resignation with which people listen to a sermon. But when he rises to reply one becomes conscious of ability of a rare and curious kind. He cannot create an atmosphere, he has no

saliences of phrase, his gestures are undistinguished, and the voice is thin, dull, and before his resignation a little indistinct and low. But if you regard argument as the weaving of an intricate pattern, there is no one in the House to approach him for skill. You feel when he rises that he can never get under your rhetorical guard, and then suddenly the net is round you, and you are caught in meshes of argumentation so fine that you hardly know that they are there until you feel yourself powerless. Beware of the *retiarius*.

Conservative party politics in the last half-generation must be read as a long duel—often fought unconsciously in sleep or waking dreams—between the Balfourians and Chamberlainites, between those for whom the chief function of Conservatism is criticism and resistance to change, and those who have absorbed the Radical innovating spirit which Disraeli introduced and Chamberlain strengthened, and who are never satisfied unless the party has reform windmills of its own to tilt at; between those who love tradition, quietness, and the peaceful broad acres of national life, and on the other hand the crusaders, the propagandists, the modernists, the industrialists of the party. For the crisis between the compromising hedgers and the last-ditchers in the controversies

of 1911, which made Mr. Bonar Law the Leader of the Opposition, was a clash not only between policies, but of temperaments, and it was continuous along the lines of cleavage which began with Disraeli and deepened with Chamberlain. Mr. Bonar Law was selected to lead because he had fewer enemies than either Mr. Austen Chamberlain or Mr. Long. At the time the party was surprised at the choice and inclined to be apologetic. But it chose more wisely than it knew.

It is a tempting speculation what might have happened had George Wyndham lived. He was a man who, if he had kept his health and his application, could have bridged the gulf between the old and the new in the Conservative Party, who united some of the reformer's ardour with respect for the humane and civilised traditions of the party, and who, above all, had the gift of sympathy with Ireland, and not with the Scottish end of it alone. Mr. Bonar Law has always had the good fortune of timeliness, not only in the moment when he entered politics, but also in the moment of his election to the leadership. A few years later and the crest of the enthusiasm which brought him to the fore would have been the trough. On the Tariff Reform issue Balfour was right, and Chamberlain and his

successors were wrong; the frontal attack on Free Trade was tactically wrong, and the subtle methods of Balfour had a better chance of success. Perhaps but for the Tariff Reform issue Mr. Balfour might have been strong enough to keep Wyndham. Ireland might have been comfortably settled before the war, and alliance between the Conservative Party and Ulster might have been less crippling. It is on Ireland that Mr. Bonar Law reveals his defects most unmistakably. There is a narrow provinciality, a certain coarse grain of prejudice when he speaks about Ireland that is not in accord with the better traditions of the Conservative Party. Yet if one compares him with Balfour in this respect, it is not to his disadvantage. Bonar Law is at any rate sincere on Ireland; what's bred in the bone comes out in the flesh; and he never abandoned a conviction or a friend. Mr. Balfour, when he threw over Wyndham, certainly did the one, and perhaps did both.

It is sometimes regarded as one of the paradoxes of politics that Mr. Bonar Law, who came into power in the political crisis caused by Mr. Lloyd George's turbulent period as second-in-command under Mr. Asquith, should have become so close a friend. In reality the two have a great deal in common, even apart

from the immediate programme of the Coalition Party. Both represent in their old parties the Radical disruptive spirit; both were rebels against the passive distinction and sterile humanities of their old chiefs; both had outgrown the old party *formulæ* and neither would ever have been happy in the strait-waistcoat of the old two-party system. Mr. Lloyd George never was a Gladstonian Home Ruler, never a Cobdenite Liberal. Similarly for Mr. Bonar Law a great part of Conservatism is a closed book. Even when they differ, they are complements, the opposites that attract. To an impressionist like Mr. Lloyd George, the pre-Raphaelite argumentation of Mr. Bonar Law was invaluable in a leader of the House. Invaluable, too, are the simple honesty of Mr. Bonar Law's character, his directness, and his unswerving loyalty.

Mr. Lloyd George has done much for the politics of his lieutenant. Apart from his passion for Tariff Reform and his very unhelpful views about Ireland, Mr. Bonar Law had no political ideas of his own. But he had on a great many subjects of domestic policy an open mind, and into it Mr. Lloyd George put many new and productive thoughts. You may think as poorly as you will about the work of the Coalition, but imagine undiluted Con-

servatives running the policy of the country since the war, and the storms through which we have gone would seem a haven of rest compared with the turmoil that we might have had. Mr. Bonar Law, too, has done service to his chief. But for his assistance at the end of 1916, Mr. Asquith would have remained in power, and the war would have been prolonged or lost. It was Mr. Bonar Law, again, who made the alliance between the Conservatives and the Coalition Liberals possible, and when his health broke down, the emotion of Mr. Lloyd George in announcing the temporary retirement of his Conservative colleague was not histrionical, but proof of a very sincere personal friendship. Mr. Lloyd George knew that the departure of Mr. Bonar Law inevitably meant the widening of the breach between the two wings of the Coalitionists, and his anticipations are being fulfilled. The breach, which sooner or later seems certain, is, perhaps, as well for Mr. Lloyd George, for valuable as was Mr. Bonar Law's personal influence with the Conservatives, the alliance between them was in many respects unequal. Mr. Bonar Law brought no ideas into the common stock, and pinioned the flight of Mr. Lloyd George's genius—perhaps inflicted an irreparable injury on his reputation. And yet one doubts whether

the stories of disagreement between the two had any real foundation. No one can be certain which of the rival set of views within the Coalitionist party will ultimately leaven the lump. But had Mr. Bonar Law not left politics, one might safely have hazarded a prediction. If and when the Conservative Party broke away from Mr. Lloyd George, it would no longer have been under the lead of Mr. Bonar Law; and should the Prime Minister, as so many expect, move to the Left in politics, Mr. Bonar Law would still have been found at his side, faithful and loyal always—always helpful in the minor tactics, hampering in the larger strategy of politics.

MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL



[*L.N.A.*

MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL.

XI

MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL

SOME men hang themselves on their politics, others hang their politics on themselves, and these need to be stout pegs, well screwed into the scheme of things, as indeed Mr. Churchill is. He manages it very well. His first party will still have no good said of him, his second believes him to be hankering after his first love, and latterly he has been advertising for a new Centre Party which is to combine the charms of the other two. But even if this third match came off and then turned out ill, Mr. Churchill would not be greatly embarrassed, for wherever he is there is his party.

That is not to say that he is unprincipled or self-seeking. On the contrary, he has a very lofty conception of duty in public affairs, and there is high authority for the view that to be true to oneself is to be false to no one else. In politics there is often more falseness, and even treachery, in consistency than in change, and of Mr. Churchill almost alone among politicians

it may truthfully be said that he is always candid, always himself, in his public utterances. Even if it were not part of his public conscience, why should he not be when to be himself is to be so variably interesting? In Lancashire, a saying of his used to be quoted that the Churchills die young, the inference being that Mr. Churchill changed sides because he recognised at the beginning of the century that the Liberals were in for a long lease of power. That was certainly the Conservative view of the matter, but Mr. Churchill's faults are those of an impetuous not of a calculating nature, and the more likely explanation of his defection was some resemblance, real but exaggerated by the son's loyalty, between the politics of that time and of the period of his father's resignation.

That the son is intensely loyal to his father's memory we know from one of the best political biographies in the language, and it was natural, entering politics so young and without much wardrobe of his own, that he should use his father's old suits—his zeal for economy and fiscal purity (what repelled him most of Protection was always its temptations to political corruption) and his dislike of certain forms of Imperialism. Already in South Africa he had given great offence by pleading for

conciliation with the beaten but still resisting Boers. Having elected to go over to the Liberals, the zeal of the convert followed as a matter of course. Mr. Churchill does nothing by halves. Certainly, no one expressed the dominant creed of 1906 with such fervour of apparent conviction, and thus early was put in pickle the rod that was used so bitterly in the middle of the war. From 1906 to 1910 Mr. Churchill was very thick with Mr. Lloyd George, and Mr. Churchill made some contributions of his own—notably the Labour Exchanges—to the "social policy" of those days.

In everything he does or says there has always been a certain amplitude. He is the only subaltern who ever had the hardihood to have views of his own on the North-West Frontier, and the literary gift to make them interesting. Only a few years after this first book of his he was criticising Lord Kitchener for his conduct of the Sudan campaign. He never forgets that he is the descendant of our only military strategist, and he believes in hereditary missions and inherited gifts. He has a finely dramatic sense, and at one time he had the John Burns gift of always being about whenever anything was to be done in character. He escapes from a Boer prison and the thing

becomes an Odyssey; there is a fight with some Russian anarchists in a back street, and he makes it a veritable siege of Lille—guns, oaths, *bravura* complete. Physically brave, he loves danger for its romance, while not forgetting that real adventure with a dash of colour is as good as a sky-sign advertisement.

And yet with this tendency to the theatrical there goes a rich vein of common sense, and his natural genius is fortified by an amazing power of application and hard work. He can be "viewy" about what does not matter, but he never leaves in the air an opinion seriously held, without having a host of arguments and facts ready to support it on the flanks. He is vain but not conceited, and with regard to his own work keenly conscientious. Nothing is more to his credit than the development of his power in debate. He took great risks when he entered on a political career, for his copiousness of expression and fecundity of ideas did not guarantee him success on the platform, or in debate. The voice is harsh, with some slight impediment, and, like many people who excel, he is not free from nervousness. The perfect logical architecture, the happy phrase and rich formal rhetoric have always been his, but at first they were the virtues of the man of letters rather than the orator. He always

carried heavy guns, but they were not mobile. Now he is one of the best of debaters. He can create an atmosphere, he is a master of dangerous retort, and always there is the sense of power and mastery. It is the result of sheer hard work and of a power of self-criticism with which he is not usually credited.

When the father's clothes, in spite of repeated dyeing, had to be discarded, he emerges as a very creditable Whig, and that angered the Tories the more, for they have always hated Whigs more than Radicals. At the Admiralty he withstood the economists and founded a Naval General Staff (a very poor one), and it was due to one of his alert decisions that the Fleet was fully mobilised at the outbreak of war. He has great qualities as an administrator, but they are hardly those which one would have expected of him. It would not have surprised anybody to find one so irreverent of authority, so original in conception, and so daring in execution starting new ideas and running them to death. Nothing of the kind. He is industrious and makes himself master of detail, he balances judiciously and more often than not declines to the conventional.

One could imagine a man of Mr. Churchill's great intellectual power carrying out reforms

at the Admiralty that would have made the early naval history of the war a very different thing, for the Navy was ready for war in everything but that which mattered most, the habit of independent and unconventional thought, and this he might have supplied. At the War Office at the end of the war the same opportunity seemed to offer, and again there is the same disappointment. There is tremendous efficiency and business ability, and feats of organisation are accomplished, but of the man himself, with his sheer intellectual power and his fertility of ideas, there is no sign. It may be after all that the fabric of his thinking is conventional, and only its colouring and expression are original; or it may be that his mind does not gear readily to other minds, and that he must either think and act independently for himself, or when that is impossible tumefy the conventions.

The second is probably the true explanation for what, after all, is the salient fact in Mr. Churchill's career, that he is always raising expectations and disappointing them, and that each disappointment leaves one not a whit less expectant than before. It covers, too, the tragedies of Antwerp and Gallipoli. As strategical conceptions they were the best on either side in the war, and worthy of Blenheim.

The first fastened on the great blunder of German strategy that in its absurd confidence of ending the war on the West in six weeks it had left this right flank uncovered. What else were the agonies of Passchendaele three years later but the foul nightmare of this lost strategic opportunity? The Dardanelles enterprise, again, would, had it succeeded, have saved Russia, hastened the collapse of Austria by two years, and reduced the campaigns in Turkey to the dimensions of a small war. To one who sees these things in a flash, as Mr. Churchill did, the delays of persuasion are a torture. At Antwerp it was necessary to act precipitately or not at all, but in the Dardanelles delay would have done no harm, and in an evil hour he committed himself to a purely naval attack.

Yet Churchill was right in wanting to renew the attack next day, for it would have succeeded, as we now know, and the younger naval men were with him right to the end of the disastrous enterprise. In the land campaign in Gallipoli the luck was even more peevishly perverse. When the last attempt to capture the Peninsula was made by the landing at Suvla, there were in front of the British divisions the merest handful of Turkish irregulars. The nearest Turkish regulars, who

were not engaged, were under one Suleiman, more than fifty miles away when the landing took place. The story (based on Turkish authority) is that Suleiman at once set out on the march, and that his van reached the hills above the plain and sank down there exhausted, about the same time that Sir Ian Hamilton was reproaching General Stopford for two wasted days. In this frightful cross-purposing of precipitation and delay, of heroism, ill-luck, and victory missed by hours and yards, the gentlest lost their tempers, and it looked as though Churchill's career was irretrievably ruined. But, more fortunate than Alcibiades after his Sicilian expedition, he always had a band of friends to do him justice, and among them was the Prime Minister. Mr. Lloyd George himself was an Easterner, though not identified with the Dardanelles enterprise, and he knew that but for the grace of God he might himself have been in the tumbril. But Mr. Lloyd George, though an Easterner always, preferred the Balkan solution, and it was in fact the decision to land men at Salonica that made the abandonment of the Gallipoli enterprise inevitable. The history of the alternate attraction and repulsion of these two men for each other would make an instructive chapter of political psychology. Thrice they have

started as though on parallel lines, and each time they insensibly diverged until a rupture was only to be avoided by making another start. Twice it has been avoided so ; the third time it may be impossible.

Mr. Churchill belongs to no school of politics, and will not found one, and he has ceased even to be the revenant of the old Fourth Party. But he will never be out of politics for long, for he is even more dangerous as an enemy than as a friend. He has latterly become steadily more Conservative, less from conviction than from the hardening of his political arteries. His early Liberal velleities have dried up, the generous impulses of youth throb more slowly, and apart from some intellectual gristle his only connections with Liberalism are personal. He is out of sympathy with the Prime Minister's Russian policy, and he has a vigorous contempt for the Parliamentary Labour Party, which he takes no trouble to conceal.

In certain directions he has seemed to suffer from the fixed idea. If the Conservatives were wiser they would have made an attempt to recapture him, but there again personal feelings stand in the way, for neither Bourbons nor Orleanists can get on with the Bonapartists. At present he is indispensable to a Coalition which is suffering from the starvation of able

men, but if it develops towards the left, as seems most likely, one sees Churchill, in spite of personal prejudices, becoming a leader of a new Tory party with ideas. For by that time the fiscal issue will have become obsolescent, and there will be room in the party for a new Canning who, satirising needy knife-grinders and axe-grinders, will shape foreign policy with dignity and wisdom.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN



[N.I.

MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.

X

MR. CHAMBERLAIN

IT is better to be the father of a famous son than the son of a famous father, for the one plight illumines merit that would else have remained obscure, while the other by comparison makes honest talent seem mere mediocrity.

Mr. Austen Chamberlain has suffered in that way. But if he owed his opportunities to his father, his reputation after twenty-three years of political life is now his own and, such as it is, has been earned on his own merits and demerits. Entirely his own making, too, is his personal popularity and a curious formal courtesy in debate which is unique. It is odd that the son of a man who had so rough a tongue should be almost the only formalist now left in debate; odd, too, that the son should revert, against the tendency of the age, to the rhetorical periods which his father discarded, when they were in fashion, for his own incomparable style. But the younger men sometimes will go a generation back instead of a generation forward. He is one of the few

men who will wear his silk hat in listening to debate. To see him with his hat tilted over his eyes and his arms folded, apparently slumbering, is to sit on Mr. Wells's time-machine and be carried back to mid-Victorian politics. Perhaps that is it. He may be, in fact he is, mid-Victorian.

He was bred to politics. Rugby, Cambridge under Seeley, the Ecole des Sciences Politiques of Paris, and something at Berlin each contributed in turn to his character or accomplishment; his father, evidently, planned his education so that he should be like himself with the corners knocked off and the hollows filled in. He began his political life as his father's private secretary; Gladstone's compliment to his maiden speech on Home Rule in 1892, that it was a speech to gladden a father's heart, was not only deserved by the speaker but, incidentally, was one of the few nice things that Gladstone ever said about a Chamberlain. Then he ran through the usual *cursus honorum* of minor offices, doing everything quite well, if without distinction, and all the time increasing his claim to consideration for himself and not for his father's sake. He was in every respect superior to the average son of a great name. He had ability, character, plenty of information, and, unlike the ordinary

young aristocrat, realised the importance of being earnest. A little more and he might have captured the imagination of his party and become its leader, for with Mr. Balfour out of the way, his rivals were not dangerous. What was it that was lacking?

He had no power of original thought, but that was not very serious, for, like other politicians, he might have borrowed the ideas of others. But the one thing necessary to achieve real distinction is to bring something new into them from without—a gospel of sorts, a new idiom of thought or expression, some new leaven or it may be an explosive. Mr. Chamberlain's whole bringing up had been such as to make that impossible in his case. He began life with a ready-made political programme—as though any programme were of any use unless you have helped to make it yourself! He saw his politics so much as a family affair that he might just as well have belonged to one of the Whig ruling houses. If his father had been a Whig, all his great ability could never have carried him so far; but the son's whole training might have been designed to reconstitute the Whiggery which his father's career had done so much to overthrow.

The Unionist Party in the stormy days that followed the election of 1906, having cast out

the Cecil dynasty, was not in the mood to set up a Chamberlain dynasty, and perhaps it recognised instinctively that, in spite of the vigour and orthodoxy of his Unionist faith, his whole habit of mind was still that of its hereditary enemies, the Whigs. What is a rising politician to do who has all his life seen politics from the inside and belongs to a ruling family which has lost its political prerogatives? There are only two alternatives. Either he goes to the House of Lords, or he throws in his lot with that other power behind the throne of democracy, the Civil Service. Mr. Chamberlain took the second alternative. He is not, of course, a member of the Civil Service, but he is the embodied representative in politics of its spirit. Perhaps that has been the trouble with him from first to last, that he is not really a politician at all, but a Civil servant who happens to hold a position in the Government.

It is not a crime to be a Civil servant, but the qualities of mind that make a man a good bureaucrat disqualify him for creative politics. In ordinary times, when what is best administered may be best, Ministers may be wise who are content to express the ideas of their permanent officials in appropriate Parliamentary language, though that was not Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's way at the Colonial Office. Mr.

Austen Chamberlain's mature years were cast in extraordinary times. He was Secretary for India in the early part of the Great War. A statesman would have cast about for some simple general idea of the sort of assistance that India could most usefully render, and would have devised plans to suit his conclusion and resolutely fought all deviations from it. Obviously the work for India in the war was to defeat Turkey, and when the Mesopotamian delta had been secured by the occupation of Kurneh, the natural strategy for India was not to pursue a campaign in the interior of a country which India did not want, but to cut the communications with Constantinople either by forcing the Dardanelles or at Alexandretta. These objects could have been attained by the same or less effort as was expended on the expeditions to Baghdad and beyond.

It may be objected that it was not Mr. Chamberlain's business to foresee and work for these ends, but that of the Commander-in-Chief in India, and that is no doubt true. But a statesman would have foreseen where the Civil servant did not. The function of the statesman is to define the end, and of the Civil servant to devise the means. Mr. Chamberlain's mind remained that of the Civil servant, obsequious to the course of events but fore-

stalling, originating nothing. One hastens to add that it had all the Civil servant's sense of honour, for he took on himself the blame for the scandals that followed in Mesopotamia.

The same bureaucratic habit of mind was even more clearly revealed in his tenure of the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. The statesman-Chancellor would have early seen that the country neither would nor could stand a scale of taxation in peace to which it had cheerfully submitted in war. He would have insisted on that view and have refused to take office unless it was accepted. Having got it accepted, he would have revived all the old rigours of Treasury control over expenditure, and there would have been no thunderstorm at Dover or anywhere else. But Mr. Chamberlain is a Civil Service Chancellor. Not for him to shape the ends of policy, to foresee the gathering storm, to resist tendencies of policy that as Chancellor he deplores. What he does is to interpret the wishes of others into the language of finance; like a good Civil servant he stands by his class and defends them through thick and thin; the Government of the country is the fixed star, and all other interests revolve round it observing order due in obedience to its gravitation.

The means he took to the ends that he

has consented to let others lay down for him may not be his own fault, but that of his official advisers. Certainly his lowering of the Excess Profits Duty one year in expectation of a collapse that did not come, and his raising it in the next year when the collapse did come was a double miscalculation that destroys any chance of a reputation for financial prescience. But the gravamen of the charge against Mr. Chamberlain is not the mistakes that he has made, but that he is a Civil servant with the interests, the sympathies, and the philosophy of the service, which thinks always that if departmental wheels hum sweetly all is well with the country. The ideal Chancellor of the Exchequer would be a master of the Government and a servant of the people. Mr. Chamberlain has been the people's master and the Government's servant. Perhaps it was in any case beyond the power of anyone to discipline national finance, but Mr. Chamberlain might have tried harder if the bent of his mind had been other than it was, and the placing of Treasury control in the hands of a Cabinet Committee would then have been a victory of his policy instead of a criticism. Nor would there have been any talk of the Indian Viceroyalty for him.

When Bonar Law retired through ill-health,

it was inevitable that Mr. Chamberlain should take his place as leader of the Conservatives, and he was elected unanimously. But the thoughtful saw in the change the beginning of the end of the present Coalition. Mr. Bonar Law was an accommodator and man of tact, skilled to smooth over differences; Mr. Chamberlain having once swallowed a poker, differences under his régime tend to confirm themselves, for his view of politics regards them as the mechanical resultant in a parallelogram of forces. Mr. Bonar Law was skilled at adapting himself to the changing moods of the House; Mr. Chamberlain, though his formal set speeches have dignity and sometimes a good deal of power, is stiff and unadaptable; he has political learning, but little mother-wit, and on an issue suddenly presented to him, he may be depended upon to combine the maximum of opposition and to secure the minimum of support. He has been for these and other reasons not a good leader of the House of Commons. Moreover, there is little or no personal sympathy between him and Mr. Lloyd George, and though on some questions—Ireland may be one—his views are more liberal than those of his predecessor, these intellectual agreements are no substitute for the free conflict of ideas which, between men whose

temperaments match, so often lead to good team work. With some men you differ to agree, or else must quarrel violently ; but with men of Mr. Chamberlain's stamp you agree to differ, always retaining the highest personal esteem for them.

A reasonable man, simple and unaffected in personal intercourse, a capable administrator, an exceedingly effective speaker, especially when he is roused—Mr. Chamberlain has all the qualities but one to command respect and success. But he cannot fight a brother official ; that power lacking, there are many offices that would suit him, but the Treasury, alas, was an obvious misfit. And it was another misfit which disqualifies him for the position of leader that at a time when the country was in full revolt against being over-governed and against officialdom good and evil alike, he should be the best representative amongst politicians of the Civil Service mind.

SIR GORDON HEWART



Sir Gordon Hewart.

XI

SIR GORDON HEWART

THE Attorney-General has not escaped the suspicion that always attaches to lawyers who are politicians, but it would be juster to regard him as a politician who is a lawyer. The first sort practise the law for their conscience, and take to politics as the only sort of lay preaching whose rewards are not laid up in heaven. The second and less numerous sort, to which Sir Gordon Hewart belongs, practise the law for its rewards, and politics for the recreation and, if possible, the approval of their conscience.

He was a politician before he was a lawyer, and he must have written as many newspaper articles before he took office as Mr. Churchill since. He took to the law when he was no longer quite young, for the sake of liberty and fees, but though he got the fees, it is doubtful whether he captured much liberty. The life of a barrister is not, it has been said, a bed of roses, for either it is all bed and no roses, or if he succeeds, it is all roses and no bed. And

becoming a law officer of the Crown does not mend matters in that respect, for these much-abused and strangely envied men do twice the work for half the fees, and in addition have politics thrown in as an extra shift. No man can court politics and law quite impartially. The bias to the one or the other must come sooner or later, and in Sir Gordon Hewart's case it seems to have come definitely towards the law.

It is a pity from some points of view, for he has political gifts that have not found full expression in the Coalition. In his younger days he used to plead for the cause of constitutional reform in India, and liked his fling at the Liberal Imperialists; and in Manchester they still talk of the masterly speeches in which he presented the Free Trade case at a by-election there.

One often hears his old political friends deplore that no occasion has arisen in which a scrupulously loyal member of the Government (as he is) could have made an appeal on behalf of wronged suffering or indulged the sympathy with the underdog which is instinctive with a Liberal. To these ardent souls his Attorney-Generalship, of which an ex-Attorney-General of great distinction said recently, that never had the Crown been so well served in this

office before, seems no better than a series of appearances in behalf of Dora's drunks and disorderlies, and he has certainly been unfortunate in some of the legislation put under his care.

On the other hand, it is only fair to the Government to add that Sir Gordon Hewart might have been Home Secretary if he had wished, and perhaps at one time Irish Secretary too. He was right to decline both, for he is rather too literal for Ireland, and too sceptical for the Home Office. The War Office might have suited him, for he has an excellent head for business—he is one of the few men in the Coalition Government whose administration of his office is above criticism—and the India Office certainly would, for no one has a keener sympathy with the cause of constitutional reform or more dislike for the arrogance of a race ascendancy. But these offices would have taken him away from the law, and by the time they presented themselves the law had him firmly by the leg.

His faithfulness to the law was not altogether to the taste of the Government, which persuaded him, when Lord Reading went to India, to forgo his claims to the Lord Chief Justiceship, which everyone expected to be given him, and to remain with them. The undoubted regret of the English Bar when politics kept

him is, it is thought, to be solaced by his appointment later. He will be an ideal Lord Chief, both for his mastery of the law, and for the power of expressing it with the exactness of a scholar and the dignity of a born orator. Sir Gordon Hewart has carried orderliness of mind and the gift of style to the point of genius. He has not the sonority of Mr. Asquith, but he has greater subtlety, as sure a grasp of masses of detail, equal tightness, and more plasticity in argument. His speech is smooth and pure; the words fall unerringly into their place, not with the somewhat shambling fluency of Lord Haldane, but eyes right and shoulders back like toy soldiers. Even his impromptu speeches still manage to convey the same impression of perfect prose, and, when he is arguing, you are lost unless you dispute the premises, for there is never a nick in the smooth surface of the development.

These qualities are exceedingly useful in politics, and the Government likes to bring him in like a famous consultant, good bedside manner and all, to their desperate cases. There are two types of politicians. One type has visions, trances, divination, anacolutha, leaps, and to this type belong one or two great men in a generation (Mr. Lloyd George himself, for example), and hundreds of misfits.

The other type are exact and practical, dislike "viewiness" unless it is well warmed by experience, and will have their political bread well baked and with a good crust. Sir Gordon Hewart is of these last. It is readily understood how invaluable such a man must be to a Government like the Coalition. He speaks seldom in the House, but his success has latterly been so notable, that some have even begun to think of him as a leader of a party. Others see no more in it than an example of the perfect lawyer with a gift of style applying himself to the subject-matter of politics.

But let it never be forgotten, when we contrast the lawyer and the politician, that the edifice of British liberties is raised on the foundations of the common law, and that the great classic charters of English political liberty have no more passion and imagination in them than a statement of claim. A man is not necessarily lost to politics when he becomes Lord Chief Justice, and there is an immense mass of work crying out to be done on the boundaries of law and politics. Someone suggested recently that Sir Gordon Hewart would be the man to carry out the work of codification if this is ever seriously to be undertaken in this country.

Sir Gordon Hewart, by reason of the simplicity and straightforwardness of his political views, is a good example of the Coalition Liberal, and as such has been frequently made a target of abuse by those to whom a Liberal faith is not a compass to guide a man through his political difficulties, but a line to be toed. To him the war came as an even ruder shock than to many others because, instead of confirming his diagnosis of politics, it seemed to make havoc of much that he had implicitly believed. To these men Coalition presented itself first as a condition necessary for winning the war (as it certainly was), and secondly as a necessary stage in the development of the Liberal faith itself. They believed that the moment the faith hardened into dogma it must die here, as it has all but died abroad, and they thought that in a few years a new Liberalism would emerge, including the best elements of both parties and even possibly a wing of the Labour men. It was because he stood for this belief that Sir Gordon Hewart went down to the Liberal meetings at Leamington last year and was in effect drummed out of the party.

Whether his tactics were right or wrong, time only can show, but his policy of wanting a restatement of the Liberal faith has already

been proved to be right. In fact, a great Liberal reaction has begun in this country, and the difficulty is that its pace has outstripped the power of any political machinery to adapt itself to the changes. But it is not a reaction to the Liberal faith in its old forms. Under what banner it will ultimately range itself no one can say for certain. If under the banner of the Independent Liberals, it will be because they too have moved. On the other hand, it may be under some new Coalition banner, with Mr. Lloyd George or someone else leading. The recent movement in English politics towards a union of Coalition and Independent Liberals has, very rightly, attracted much attention, and if it matures will justify the position that Liberals like Sir Gordon Hewart have taken in the politics of the last five years. Personalities apart, there is precious little between the Coalition Liberals and their old friends, who have paid them the compliment of imitating their policy and reshaping the old faith to new conditions. What a meeting there may be some day of these flying tangents !

LADY ASTOR



Lady Astor.

XII

LADY ASTOR

AS the first woman Member of the British House of Commons, Lady Astor has already won a place in history. Her place in the House itself is less certain. On her first day, when she was introduced by the Prime Minister and Mr. Balfour, it looked (they say) for a fraction of a second as though she would like to take a seat on the front Government Bench, between these two good friends.[1] Having avoided this

[1] This ceremony of introduction is an awkward and even a formidable ceremony. You stand with a sponsor on each side of you, at the bar of the House, which is a brass plate about 12 feet in front of the door, marking the place where the formalities of the "floor" begin. The newly-elected Member waits there until the Speaker calls him, and then bows, if possible in time with his two sponsors. The three then march half-way up the floor, if possible in alignment, then halt, bow again, and then march up to the Mace, where they bow for the third time, and the sponsors then leave the new Member in charge of the Clerk, who administers the oath, and makes him sign his name in a book. The House always appreciates any little comicalities to which these manœuvres may give rise. The instinct of a man introduced to an assembly of women in these circumstances would undoubtedly be to sit down confusedly next to his two ascertained friends.

perilous place, she took the seat of Sir William Joynson-Hicks, that gentleman being away in Egypt, but on his return some time later, he made a constitutional affair of it, and Lady Astor had to take refuge on the Labour Benches, where she sits somewhat vagrantly, but usually under the lee of the portly Mr. Will Thorne. The Labour men sit less on their dignity, and she has good friends amongst them, including Mr. J. H. Thomas; and when they differ it is with the utmost amiability. In spite of her millions, it is noticeable that the average working-man gets her woman's point of view much more quickly than the average middle-class man. In Virginia Lady Astor belonged to what would here be called the squirearchy. But she was one of a big family, and they work hard on the land in America. The squirearchy of the Langhornes was more like what you will find in Galway or Tipperary than in Sussex or South Cheshire, only it was free from the snobbery that is the besetting sin of Irish life. She learned much in those early days which she has never forgotten; and her sympathy with labour is quite free from affectation and in certain directions very deep.

Her Parliamentary manners lack the intellectual sexlessness of, say, women deputies in Finland, nor do they imitate the studied

somnolence of the British male legislator, who, when he wants to look the part, crosses his legs, closes his eyes, and tilts his hat (if he is wearing one) on to his nose. She is restless and animated as she listens, and approval or disapproval is shown in her face, and sometimes signified *sotto voce* to her neighbours. She has adopted a kind of Parliamentary uniform, consisting of a dark blue skirt, a white blouse, and white gloves, which she often wears about her wrists, leaving her hands bare the better to handle papers. She has acquired the Parliamentary habit of leaving the House when bores are up, but not the trick of asking questions which with her leave the interrogative and acquire the hortatory or reproachful mood, and get her ruled out of order. She speaks rarely, and not attractively. Her voice is, in its upper notes, a little harsh (a common fault amongst fashionable women in England), has one or two good deep notes, but no intermediate tones. There are faint traces of an American accent, and dropped final g's, like flies in amber, show that she must have entered English society about twenty years ago, when the smart set boycotted this letter. She pleads and coaxes (like a missionary to an assembly of inebriates), but does not argue. She has learned not to address her remarks to

one Member, but to the Speaker, who, however, is often visibly embarrassed by buttonholing exhortations to combat the evils of strong drink. On the other hand, there is sometimes an original or graphic turn of phrase, and she is good at a retort. Her subjects are the drink question, and everything that concerns the family life; Plymouth, where her constituents are all Drakes and Pilgrim Fathers; and friendly relations with the United States of America, on behalf of which she never misses an opportunity of putting in a word. But as a speaker she frankly disappoints the House. She is clearly not an intellectual woman, and her influence in politics, which is rather greater than is generally thought, is due to purely feminine qualities. Conspicuous among these qualities are mother wit and a ready tongue, simplicity, naturalness, and the other qualities that make a good electioneer. Electioneering, indeed, is her strength outside the House, and her weakness within it, for the House, like Royalty, does not like being spoken to like a public meeting. She has, too, the simple direct logic that gets things done. It is one of the vanities of men to deny the possession of logic to women, but Shakespeare, who understood women, knew better. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth represent the typical antithesis of

man and woman where action is concerned. The man is for ever balancing alternatives, trying to make the best of both worlds, and making ineffective compromises between irreconcilable courses. With the woman the transition from an opinion to a policy or an act is much more direct; it was Lady Macbeth who said, "Give me the dagger." Lady Astor is like that when she is denouncing the liquor trade. It explains too (though in this case there is no question of daggers) why she has always had so great a dislike for Mr. Asquith as a politician. Women, generally, have an instinctive preference for extreme and logical policies. If Lady Astor has seemed once or twice of late to shake her head doubtfully over her old political hero, the Prime Minister, it is probably because, in his anxiety to keep the Coalition together, he has conceded too much to compromise and ambiguity.

The influence of enfranchised women on political affairs is one of the chief elements of doubt in modern English politics. They are more tangential and less stable than the male elector, and less under the control of the party machine. The old fear that they would vote as women in opposition to men has turned out to be groundless, as sensible people always prophesied that it would do; but the

masses of women voters are easily carried away by an agitation, and when their sympathies are once aroused, they have no party ties and no old political traditions to hold them back. They pass easily from one side to another, and there is reason to think that the remarkable turnover of votes in recent by-elections, especially in the Home Counties, was due in great measure to the women electors. *Varium et mutabile semper.* They are certainly not going to be the politically Conservative force in the electorate that was once thought, and their enfranchisement has undoubtedly increased the power of the agitator (within certain well-defined limits, however, for most women are socially, though not politically, Conservative). If these views be sound, the change may still be for the better, for it is possible even for the ship of State to have too much ballast, and they are certainly no argument against enfranchisement which, like earlier enfranchisements of men, was given as a right and not in expectation of the results, good or evil, that might be expected to follow. But they do increase the interest that Lady Astor has as the first woman Member of Parliament.

The real danger is the persistently personal character of their political judgments. Alike

in its remorseless logic and in its personal barb, the white feather crusade in the war was typical of women's psychology in politics. But it is better that the first woman Member should be a typically feminine woman without any marked political abilities, and with interests that run entirely in the direction of social conservatism. There are women in politics who, whether as speakers or as thinkers on politics, are far better than most men at their own game; the suffrage movement threw up dozens of such women. Had the first woman M.P. been of this type, her contribution to Parliamentary politics might have been more momentous, but it would hardly have been so distinctive as Lady Astor's. She would have added no new idiom to our Parliamentary politics; she would merely have exaggerated the bias that masculine politics have acquired through centuries of Parliamentary government, might have terrified the average man by her ability and perhaps produced a reaction against women candidatures. But, though Lady Astor's Parliamentary achievement has not been great, it has served to indicate the most important service that women may render in Parliament. The most useful women Members, at any rate for the present, are not those who can discuss men's politics most like men, but

those who can introduce new subjects that men have overlooked, and new points of view not even suspected. Lady Astor has made herself the representative of women's interest in home life, rather than in public life. When she talks temperance reform, it is not merely or so much because it will contribute to the communal welfare, but because she regards intemperance as an organised commercial fraud upon the home. This same inspiration runs through many of her speeches, and not on temperance alone; for in her zeal for education there is the same womanly zeal for the welfare of the young and the increase of efficiency. She may talk about the general welfare, but really it is the woman's interest in the welfare of the individual that animates her. She has the woman's interest, too, in health and nursing, as she showed by turning her beautiful house at Cliveden, up the Thames, into a hospital during the war, and she has the greatest contempt for those anti-wasters who attack the work of the health and the education departments without distinguishing between the waste of inefficient administration and the sound national investment of more knowledge and better health. She has courage and her instincts are usually sound. But one serious mistake that she made in opposing desertion

as a ground for divorce, gave a handle to much misrepresentation. Her first marriage was an unhappy one, and she had obtained a judicial separation for desertion which later became a decree of divorce. She was reproached with having obtained a collusive divorce on the ground of desertion, and for denying to working-women the freedom of divorce that she had claimed for herself. Her answer was complete, though somewhat technical, but the attacks undoubtedly injured her, not only with the vulgar, but even with some who, though not vulgar, did not know her. The offending speech was an example of her impulsive but ill-considered regard for the unit of the family.

Lady Astor's real influence in politics is exercised outside the House as a hostess. The Astor salon in London, and still more her house-parties in the country, are the occasion of many meetings between men of different parties, and undoubtedly did much to make Coalition easier. Lady Astor is not an intriguer, nor are her own political views either deep or subtle. But she has a keen eye for ability, and it is her delight to know able men and to make them know each other. Mr. Balfour and Mr. Lloyd George were of her circle, and the esteem which these two men,

temperamentally so different, undoubtedly have for each other may have originated or been confirmed at her parties. She has the woman's gift of realism when she is meeting men and not dealing with principles, and she is an ideal hostess, who loves to be kind to merit while it is still obscure.

MR. J. H. THOMAS



Mr. J. H. Thomas.

XIII

MR. J. H. THOMAS

MR. J. H. THOMAS, at a small conference, was once whirling wild words round his head like a battle-axe, when the Prime Minister interrupted him. "That's all very well for the heathen, Mr. Thomas," he said, "but remember that I'm a Welshman too."

To be a Welshman usually means that you have the gift of splitting yourself up into several personalities and speaking out of each in turn as though it were your whole self. The Anglo-Saxon, who has not this gift, is apt to call it by hard names, and thereby often does his brother Celt an injustice. Mr. Thomas has suffered from time to time in this way, but in reality he has a simple nature, and his ends are quite straightforward and sincere. Only, it must be remembered that whereas the mere Englishman is inflexional in his mental processes, the Celt is agglutinative. The one reaches his conclusions, like a weak verb,

without altering his radical vowel, the other passes through half a dozen stems before arriving at his final meaning.

Mr. Thomas has probably a stronger hold over the railwaymen than any other Labour leader has over his union. He began work as an errand-boy at nine years of age, became an engine-cleaner, and later an engine-driver, and according to the Great Western Railway Company a very good one. He entered national politics by way of the municipal affairs of Swindon, and by his remarkable work in organising the various railway trade unions into a single amalgamation. He is a great believer in organisation by industry and not by the multifarious trades contained within the industry, and much of Mr. Thomas's reputation in his union is due to the accumulation of thousands of unrecorded feats of tact in smoothing over sectional jealousies. This sort of thing grows the man as the madrepores grow the coral islands, and the recurring concept of Mr. Thomas is of one wiping his brows after some prodigy of tactful persuasion and murmuring, "Oh, what a time I have had with my men!" Many stories are told of the joint operations of the distinguished Mr. Spenlow Thomas and plain Mr. Thomas Jorkins, but they are very likely untrue, and if they were true they none

of them affect the essential integrity of the firm. All some men

> have power to see is a straight staff bent in a pool,

and one seems to remember reading in Jefferies somewhere that if you're fishing and want to catch your fish, you must not throw a straight shadow over the water; a crooked shadow does not matter so much, because it may be mistaken for an overhanging bough. Mr. Thomas throws a crooked shadow. But then what a pool! And what big, shy, and wily fish! The man himself is straight.

Mr. Thomas is not a bookish man, though he can write forcibly, and almost his only school has been in public affairs. Such men labour under disadvantages, of which the chief is that because you are always learning, and therefore changing your mind, you are supposed to have no mind of your own, or, worse still, to have two minds, which you use alternatively as convenience dictates. *Litera scripta manet*, and so, both for good and evil, does a principle which comes out of a book, and has been diligently conned in youth. But half the stern, immutable principles that are so much admired are really stiff-jointedness, a sort of rheumatism caught in early education which those men whose schooling has been in mature life escape.

Mr. Thomas has no fixed philosophy of politics in the academic or scholastic sense; nor is there a commoner mistake made in judging the great leaders of trade union action in England than that of imagining them to be working out everything according to some theory. They may do that in Germany or Russia, but not here, where they are nearly to a man opportunists and tacticians whose aims depend not only or even so much on their preconceived views, but on what the other people do. It is a vice of class consciousness in the bourgeoisie that it regards Labour policy as something outside its own influence, whereas in fact they have as much to do with shaping it as the Labour leaders themselves. If they are class-conscious, so will the proletariat be; if, on the other hand, they understand and respond, they will meet with response, and politics will be a subtle chemistry of human nature, as they should be, and not the conflict of fixed mechanical forces. That is the nearest approach to a general idea for which men like Mr. Thomas stand.

A man who has made a national anything is in danger of becoming a nationaliser, and Mr. Thomas, if not a theoretical Socialist, is a Socialist with regard to railways. But he is quite definitely Fabian and not revolutionary,

and he dislikes strikes. His idea of a Labour leader is that he should be able to get what he wants without a strike. He does not inflame, he does not bluff, and though his own presentation of himself as one who is always wrestling with beasts at Ephesus is overdrawn, he will oppose the majority when opposition has a fair chance of success; he will stand up for what he considers the best policy for the country, provided that the cost be not too great; and he will leap down from the fence on the dry side if the alternative is falling into the last ditch. He is a wise rather than a heroic counsellor, but it is the better part both for the country and for his union, as recent events have shown.

Mr. Thomas at his best is an impressive speaker, in spite of his Cockneyisms. He always sees an issue in a big sort of way, and when he is seen quaking and trembling at the approaching last day, it is not from affectation, but from the natural man's terror and reverential awe before the cosmic processes. His mind is exceedingly quick: he misses no point in an argument; he negotiates with art, and on occasion with directness. When a problem is first propounded, he sidles and minces up to it like a stoat hunting a rabbit; but he ends by biting once and no more. With every

temptation to become as one of the bourgeoisie, he is loyal to his class, and his friendships outside of it do not affect the direction of his policy, though they may be responsible for some of its twists. His ambition is to go down to history as the skilful steersman through dangerous currents into still waters. The men who steer do not row at the same time, and there is always the danger of their being swept away. If Mr. Thomas is swept away, it will be the fault of the middle classes as much as of his own, and it will be against his wish and inclination.

He hates political abstractions, and, while it would be unfair to say that his ideas of progress are purely material, his real ambition for the proletariat, if analysed, is that it should cease to be an aggregation of hands and should acquire some of the bourgeoisie's control of its labour and ownership of its profits. His Socialism leans to the guild variety rather than to that of the omnipotent State. At heart a *petit bourgeois*, he is one of the proofs that a man may be that and still not cease to be a loyal member of the proletariat.

LORD BIRKENHEAD



[*Barratt*

LORD BIRKENHEAD.

XIV

LORD BIRKENHEAD

IT is a solemn thought that if Lord Birkenhead had remained a don at Oxford he might have been at least a dean of his college by this time, with a pallor and a slight stoop. What is there in politics and the practice of the common law that keeps men young, so that the occupant of the Woolsack and the Keeper of the King's conscience can carry the roses of youth into years to which business and learning can offer only the bouquet of tired lilies? For Lord Birkenhead is not alone amongst politician-lawyers in thriving on irregular hours, scant sleep, hard work, and cooked air. There are dozens like him, only less so. What works the miracle is the athletics of the game. There is no success in politics or the law without high spirits, and both are so like the rough-and-tumble of football that the constant intellectual exercise in them has the same effect as the real game, except that it does not make them so sleepy. So true is it that the mind calls the tune for the body.

Mr. F. E. Smith (as he was) always played politics and law like a footballer. In his early days of opposition it was the fashion amongst Liberals to think of him as a muddied oaf in the scrum, and to contrast his superficial invective with the solid ratiocination of Sir John Simon. The two were together at Wadham in the early nineties—in fact they were Wadham with some assistance from Mr. C. B. Fry and Mr. Francis W. Hirst. The two used to be contrasted like the celebrated "Popular Educator" advertisement of The Boy: What will become of him? and Mr. Simon was always on the top line ascending higher and higher in fame, and Mr. Smith on the bottom line as regularly descending in discredit. The comparison did an injustice to both, but especially to Mr. Smith, who is essentially a serious man—in the French if not in the English sense of the word. He had to work hard at Oxford, for his father died young after a career as a private of adventure in the army and a successful but all too short career at the Liverpool Bar; and when Mr. F. E. Smith himself went to the Bar there was no slacking, for he married young. A great lawyer he certainly is not, though latterly he has seemed to be in some danger of becoming one, and one can well imagine that his fondness

for short cuts may often have been a trial. But he was not a Vinerian scholar for nothing. No Lord Chancellor ever had a surer grasp of the main principles of law than he, and, what is not, perhaps, so well known, no one ever had greater power of work—hard, rapid, and at the same time sure. In law, as in politics, he has falsified the predictions of the old fogies.

Some people do their work, as the Pharisees did their praying, in public so that all men may see, and they have their reward in being taken very seriously. Mr. Smith in this matter of work was—still is as Lord Birkenhead—one of the Sadducees. Work with him is a disagreeable necessity, the mere kitchen and back apartments of the palace that is life, not to be explored, still less exhibited. But the work gets done, which is the main thing, and when it is done, secretly and by stealth, as a duke might keep a toffee-shop to add to his income, the real business of a free man, which is to enjoy the phantasmagoria of life and power, begins. Lord Birkenhead has always enjoyed the magnificences, like his distinguished predecessor on the Woolsack, Cardinal Wolsey. The apocryphal story of how Mr. Justice Bigham, as he then was, pretended to mistake the Mersey Dock and Harbour Board's new buildings for Mr. F. E. Smith's

chambers dates back to his days as a junior in Liverpool; and after that beginning £3,500 for a Lord Chancellor's bathroom is not much to make a song about. Aristotle, it will be remembered, puts magnificence amongst the virtues.

Lord Birkenhead comes from Lancashire, but from West not East Lancashire, and it makes all the difference. East Lancashire goes with the West Riding of Yorkshire, West Lancashire goes with Belfast; and between the two Lancashires you could until quite recently find bits of agricultural country as feudal as Shropshire. In spite of the connection of trade, the separation both of history and of race between the two is complete, and it explains the difference in their political characters and between the politics of Lord Birkenhead and Sir John Simon, who is in many respects a typical Manchester Liberal. Scratch an East Lancashire Liberal, and you will find principles as plentiful and unnutritious as unripe blackberries, mixed with memories of Cobden and of the hungry forties, and of the wicked early days of the cotton trade, when you were either a tyrannical exploiter or a low-spirited wage-slave. Scratch a Liverpool Conservative, and you will probably find a Belfast democrat. The key to Lord Birkenhead's politics is the fact that Liverpool is really a suburb of Ulster, with

the Irish Sea flowing between them like a wide river. The same may be said, though with less truth, of Glasgow, and that explains why Mr. Bonar Law allied the Conservative Party so closely with the Ulster malcontents before the war, and why Lord Birkenhead was Galloper Smith. It explains the Church and State paraphernalia with which Liverpool dowered Lord Birkenhead along with his practice. But it explains too how Lord Birkenhead is so good a democrat—a better democrat, surely, than his Liberal anti-type, Sir John Simon.

Lord Birkenhead used often to be reproached for the abuse and low argumentative power of his speeches, but when he chooses no man can argue better. His first speech in Parliament, delivered in the first days of Conservative depression after the heavy defeats of 1906, is often said to have been the most successful maiden speech ever made in the Commons ; but in fact it was neither better nor worse than half a dozen speeches made every year in the Oxford Union. It was the circumstance of the speech that made it so effective ; and nothing more surely proves the essential balance and sanity of Lord Birkenhead's mind than that he recognised that fact in the first flush of success, and when next he spoke was very careful to do something entirely different, and to show that

he, too, could argue powerfully on a serious and dry topic. The subject was the exemption of private property at sea from capture in time of war, which he supported. His virulence, his invective, and his affectation of the slapdash are not indiscretions, but calculated. His view, no doubt, is that people do not want argument at a public meeting, but to be told and amused, and though he must often have underrated the intelligence of his audiences, it is undoubtedly true that a public meeting, especially at election time, is about the worst medium possible for a serious argument. Lord Birkenhead takes dangerous liberties with forms, and he must be the one Lord Chancellor who has dared to be off-hand and casual on the Woolsack. Perhaps that manner is calculated too. Oddly enough, when he writes he is serious almost to stolidity, unduly embarrassed, perhaps, by the truth, of which his practice at the Bar must have supplied him with many awful illustrations, that *litera scripta manet.*

The office of Lord Chancellor used to be regarded as far too grave and reverend for party politics in the ordinary sense. Sir John Simon declined the office to become Home Secretary, the theory being that when a man becomes Lord Chancellor he is done for as far

as supreme political power is concerned. There is no reason why that should be so, and one would be much surprised if Lord Birkenhead intended it to be so. On the contrary, it is said—with what truth one does not know—that when he took the Lord Chancellorship it was on the distinct understanding that the House of Lords should be reformed. He has certainly never acted as though he regarded his office as in any degree analogous to that of the Speaker of the House of Commons. His interventions in debate are frequent and vigorous; he is the real leader of the House; and in a reformed House his power in politics would be immense, almost rivalling that of a Prime Minister in the Commons. His speeches in the Lords have been better than any that he made in the Commons, and, paradoxically, have had more genuine passion. A speech of his on the reform of the law of divorce, in which he challenged the idea of marriage as a mere ecclesiastical sacrament, glowed with conviction, like a fire challenging red against the white lawn of the Bishops; and his speech on the second reading of the Home Rule Bill, though less passionate, was worthy of its association with Lord Grey's.

Intellectually honest and impatient of the pretentious platitude that abounds even in

the Lords, most intellectual of assemblies, simple in exposition, humorous even to the grotesque in illustration, direct and candid in argument, master of the gibe that shrivels an enemy and enheartens friends—gifts much less than these have sufficed Prime Ministers in the past. He is a convinced Coalitionist, but he shares the opinion of those who hold that the present Government is not the only or the final form that Coalition can take. He is a close personal and political friend of Mr. Winston Churchill, and the two are credited with many schemes for the remodelling of politics. In familiar intercourse of this kind, the boundaries between mere idle speculation and actual plotting are somewhat hard to define, and rumour has from time to time made itself very busy with their political ambitions. But Lord Birkenhead's ambition is more subtle than that of becoming Prime Minister. It is to make himself master of a new House of Lords, capable after reform of acting as authoritative censor of both political parties, to use it as the instrument of Tory democracy, as Lord Randolph Churchill failed to do with the Commons, and to best the platform of demagogy of which his early political career was a half-conscious satire, by a progressive statesmanship of the Woolsack.

LORD DERBY



[C.N.A.

LORD DERBY.

XV

LORD DERBY

THE Derby family is the most powerful territorial influence left in England. There is usually a Stanley Member for Preston; Knowsley, the family's big house, is almost a suburb of Liverpool; Bootle is theirs, and a great deal of land on the north side of Manchester; they were once Kings in Man, and all over South Lancashire the Derby name is much affected by public-houses for their signboards and by fond mothers for their first-born. In London the Grosvenors and Russells count for nothing among the electors, but let no one suppose that the Derby family influence in Lancashire is the feudalism that still lingers on in South Cheshire and Shropshire. It is mainly urban and expresses itself as a purely political rather than a social force. It is the irritant within the oyster round which the pearls of Lancashire Conservatism grow. It was the great Earl of Derby who was Prime Minister when Disraeli brought in and carried the Reform Bill to which the industrial towns

owe most of their votes. He described it as "a leap in the dark," but he was faithful to the policy, and he has been justified. The Conservative working-man is still a great force in English politics, especially in the North. Disraeli discovered him, the Derbys adopted him, and feudalism, driven out by the front door in the industrial north, came in again by the back door, disguised.

A seventeenth Earl of Derby has great advantages apart from those conferred by personal ability. In a venal world it is the greatest of assets that you cannot be bought, and too obvious a cleverness would only mar the reputation for bluff straightforward John Bullishness which you can have for a few impulsive indiscretions and confirm by generous apology. Lord Derby in a Lords debate during the war threw doubt on the patriotism of Lord Ribblesdale. The insult, and the apology for it afterwards, were both so handsome that together they enhanced a reputation. A man is forgiven for not always meaning what he says if he is thought always to say what he means. A seventeenth earl who gets that character, and also has ambition, starts political life with an enviable capital.

It is now abundantly clear that Lord Derby has political ambition. In 1911, when he was

distributing prizes at a technical school in Nelson, he told the boys how important it was to have an aim in life. He himself had started with two ambitions—to win the Derby, and be Prime Minister. Lord Rosebery said it before him, but it was not the less true on that account. He had run second in the Derby, and he had been Lord Mayor of Liverpool so far, but he told them he had not done trying for the others yet. It is a Lancashire habit, when you want to say a thing without committing yourself to it, to say it jestingly, and to take these observations literally may not be quite playing the game. Still there are many things more unlikely than that Lord Derby is still hopeful of winning the Derby, and even of becoming Prime Minister.

His political career, though intermittent, has not been by any means undistinguished. At the Post Office he negotiated the agreement for the purchase of the National Telephone Company's undertaking; also he called the postal servants "bloodsuckers." The first showed the buoyant hopefulness of his temperament, the second his courage. He had previously been Chief Press Censor to Lord Roberts in South Africa, another example of courage, and he was later private secretary to Lord Roberts, whose views on compulsory military service he

shared. In the Great War he was appointed Director of Recruiting at a time when it was obvious that we should want all our man-power, and, looking back, everyone can now see that if conscription had to come it would have been better if we had adopted it early and openly (as they did in America) instead of slipping into it backwards as we did. The Derby Scheme was the passage in his life that was least like Lord Derby; it was tactful when bluntness would have been not only more in character, but more helpful; it was compromising when no compromise was possible, apologetic when no apology was needed. No one can combine the businesses of doctor and undertaker without exciting comment, and though Lord Derby honestly did his best by the voluntary system, it was the undertaker who won. Later in the war Lord Derby became British Ambassador in Paris, and the French people like him and he them. He could have had office in the Coalition Government, but declined.

Lord Derby came home from France not because he wanted to leave Paris, but, as he put it, "to take up again the manifold work and interests that I have in this country." By that he probably meant to look after the fortunes of the Conservative Party. Lord

Derby believes in Coalition, but it must be Coalition inside his party, and when he came back from Paris it was to take steps so that his party should digest the Coalition, not the Coalition it. The Liberal wing of the Coalition have frequently accused Mr. Bonar Law of clipping the wings of Mr. Lloyd George's Radicalism. Lord Derby is one of the Coalitionists who think that Mr. Bonar Law has conceded too much of the essence of Conservatism to his alliance with Mr. Lloyd George. He was a rebel against the conquest of the Conservative Party by the ideas of Joseph Chamberlain, and now that they have fallen into disrepute, would like to enthrone a new Tory democracy on the throne vacated by the Cecils. He is the antipole to those Coalitionists who look forward to a transfer, some time or other, of its goodwill to a new Liberal Party. Whether it is called Liberal, or National Democratic, or Centre, is a mere detail to these people; the point is that it shall be Liberal in inspiration and shall take over as many Conservatives as can be managed.

Conversely with Lord Derby the point is that it shall be Conservative in inspiration and bring over as many Liberals as like to come. He recognises the need of his party for new

blood, and he has a very sincere admiration for Mr. Lloyd George. "Have we not taken Mr. Lloyd George in?" he asked not long ago, "or" (a characteristic trick, this, of buttoning his foil with a jest) "has he taken us in?"

Lord Derby is not so sure, and his uncertainty explains why he has come back to England. "There are the two Cecils," one can imagine him saying on his way back, "gone over to the Liberals and the Front Opposition Bench, Balfour diffusing blessings out of the sunset, Bonar Law and all the bright new planets of the Conservative Party revolving in the Lloyd George orbit, Chamberlain unpopular, Long gone, Sutherland organising Liberal Coalition forces so as to negotiate with us on equal terms! Time someone came back to look after things. So here am I, Rupert of honest party strife, autochthonous but progressive Tory, with keys to the mind of Lancashire, and everything handsome about me." It is a piquant situation, and one that will provide much of the interest in the next evolution of our domestic parties.

It cannot be said that the return of Lord Derby has been without effect. The speech of the Prime Minister about the Labour Party coincided with the pre-Sessional rumours of

Conservative disgruntlement, and may have had no connection with Lord Derby's return. But the Tory revolt of the spring, quelled by Mr. Bonar Law at the time, revived in the summer, and this time there was no doubt that Lord Derby was at the back of it. On two or three issues of policy, Lord Derby has taken a strong line. He knows Lancashire, which is nervous about all interferences with fiscal policy, and he is very anxious that the Conservative Party should not be wagged by its Protectionist zealots. He it was who got the taxation of food thrown out of the official policy of the Unionist Party, and it was at a breakfast at his house that the compromises were arranged which made it possible for some Lancashire Free Traders, Liberal and Conservative, to support or, at any rate, to shrug their shoulders at the Safeguarding of Industries Bill. Secondly, he does not want all the discredit of Irish coercion to be put on the Conservatives and all the credit of a settlement on the Liberal Coalitionists, and his visit to Dublin as "Mr. Edwards," if it did nothing else, at any rate pegged out a claim for prestige in the event of Ulster and Sinn Fein reconciling their differences. Lastly, and more important, Lord Derby is for an alliance with France, and if there is a split

between him and the Prime Minister, it may be on that score. With all his bluffness he has a very shrewd sense of party tactics. He is watching and he is a man to be watched.

MR. BRACE
AND OTHERS



[*Farringdon Photo Co.*

MR. WILLIAM BRACE.

XVI

MR. BRACE AND OTHERS

THE dour Mr. Adamson, impressivist Mr. Thomas, Mr. Clynes the earnest, and Mr. Arthur Henderson, debonair and styled in manner, are only some of the Labour men on the Front Opposition Bench. Two of the best have gone— Mr. Will Crooks—very infirm of late, silent but characterful—into retirement,[1] and Mr. Brace into the Ministry of Mines.

Mr. Brace had much the best Parliamentary manner of them all. Ex-Guardsman and ex-hewer, beautiful in the curl alike of his moustaches and his sentences, he is a real strategist in argument, and has a vigorous and independent mind. His speech on the coal strike in 1920 was one of the cleverest things ever done in the Commons, and was quite sensibly, as one heard it, making history. His departure is a great loss to the debating power of the Labour benches, and one is tempted to wish that Mr. Hartshorn, also a man of marked

[1] Mr. Crooks has since died.

ability, but of a different kind that might have excelled in administration, could have gone to the Ministry of Mines and Mr. Brace stayed in the House. Deans have been heard to complain of the competition of the working-classes in schools and professions. But how much bitterer and juster the complaint of the working-classes of the wholesale pillage of their talents. It is a modern illustration to the story of the tyrant and the tall poppies.

The Labour men badly need a real leader, and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald (whose return is constantly postponed) is the type of man that the party needs for its Parliamentary efficiency, though perhaps not for its political progress in the country. If Mr. Adamson, the present leader, were a duke, no one would listen to him at all, and it saddens one to think of Jaurès in France and Vandervelde in Belgium, and then to have to sit down to Mr. Adamson's plate of thick porridge—there always seems such a lot of it. The Labour Party, at a great crisis in its history like this, should not do these things.[1]

Mr. Clynes is a man of a very different type. Obviously of Manchester, he has a close and intimate style of argument and he is one of the few Labour Members—Mr. William Graham,

[1] Mr. Adamson has been succeeded as leader by Mr. Clynes.

not yet of the Front Bench, is another—who can put themselves at another point of view than his own, which is the beginning of persuasion. Always thoughtful and sure of a good audience, he lacks strength, and has not the overbearing quality of a leader. Mr. Henderson, again, strikes one, with his pleasant manner and agreeable fluency, as the sort of man who is good except at a pinch. Mr. Thomas is of the confidential, mysterious, and accommodating type, and gives one the impression that he only drops his h's to disarm the suspicions of the proletariat. But he is undoubtedly a man who can conceive and hold a big idea and give it, on occasion, strong and appropriate expression. Nor should one forget Mr. Tom Shaw, who also speaks from the Front Bench, and much too rarely.

What is wrong with the Labour Party? When one has to catalogue its men in this way, and sees so much to interest and like without finding The Man, it is a sign that the party has not found itself, and that its policy is still only tentative and dissipated with tendencies. The superficial fault is that most of it has still to master the science of Parliamentary procedure. The number of effectives in the Irish Nationalist Party is three, or perhaps four, but they can manage to get a debate about Ireland two or

three times a week, usually against the will of the vast majority, and there is no end to the irrelevancies that they make relevant and to the runs they steal. Hardly a single Labour Member has developed the art, although their subject, one would have thought from the number and complication of its details, ought to be inexhaustible in its opportunities.

One explanation is that the deep and close study of the rules of Parliament is a tradition that has come down from Parnell's day, and that the Labour men are still amateurs at the game, throwing away opportunities wholesale. The party certainly wants a coach, preferably an Irishman; and if we could only get Home Rule working in Ireland we should get Irishmen here, not as Catholics and Protestants, or Nationalists and Unionists, but as Tories, Liberals, and Labour men, to the great gain of all three parties, but especially of the last. For the Irishman has undoubtedly a racial gift for Parliamentary politics. It must be remembered, in fairness to the Labour men, that the game is played with words, and that the normal training of the bourgeoisie is in words and of the working-classes in things. You hear good casual gibes and retorts from the Labour benches, and sometimes a good set speech, though it tends to sound like an essay.

But the rapid cut-and-thrust of argument, the exploitation of a mistake made by the other side, the clever adaptation of an argument to the changes of mood and situation—everything, in fact, that makes the soul of a debate—in these matters the Labour Party is, as a rule, quite helpless. You hear the clank of the chains as they talk, and against their nimbler antagonists they think of the appropriate repartee four or five sentences too late.

It is not lack of ability, as is often said, for though there are no men among them of more than ordinary stature, they are not below the average. What is wrong, and responsible most of all for their poor show as debaters, is their lack, or confusion, of ideas which, in Labour politics, as in most other things, is due to a lack of liberty. They have got hold of a theory of State Socialism which is not only shallow, but is hopelessly out of tune both with the facts and with the sentiment of the time. The supremacy of the idea of State Socialism in Labour politics passed with the defeat of Germany, for it means multiplication of officials who are hated, growth of expenditure which is undermining the basis of industry, and destruction of individual initiative.

The remarkable arrest in the prestige of the Labour Party is due to the paralysis that the

persistent advocacy of a discredited and impracticable panacea induces in thought. How can Labour thought be mobile and free when all the roads must lead to Marx? How can it gain in popular favour when, at a time like this, the upshot of its every argument, avowed or not, is that you must have more officials and more public expenditure? When the Socialists captured the Labour Representation Committee, which was the father of the present Labour Party, their contribution was that they had a remedy for one and every evil, namely, that the State should buy, administer, or work something. They supplied the trade unions with a political programme at a time when they did not know quite what they wanted, and it was something different from what the other parties had to offer and it sounded "advanced." Since then the world has turned round. The world has had in the war a vast experiment in State Socialism, and is frightened of it. The idea that then was "advanced" is now seen to be retrograde.

The party will never do anything with this German-Jewish tin-can of State Socialism tied to its tail. The cause of the comparative unpopularity of sermons is that, though they command a general measure of approval, their conclusions are always known beforehand.

How much more unfortunate than parsons are those politicians whose conclusions are not only known beforehand but generally reprobated. To be just to the Labour Party, they have lately shown a tendency to get away from the barren formulæ of State Socialism. The kind of nationalisation that was advocated for the mines, for example, was not State Socialism at all, but more like syndicalism, contemplating as it did a form of joint ownership, in which the State was only one of three partners. This is a wholesome tendency of the new Labour thought, and when it has been worked out it will make a great difference both to Labour power in Parliament and to the help that they can give in the solution of our troubles.

State Socialism is no more a distinctively Labour doctrine than is Toryism. It follows that Socialism, as such, should be cut off from the Labour Party and become an independent party It will be much better for Socialism, as Herr Ledebour used to argue against Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, for it will then have a chance as a highly intellectual political creed. On the other hand, it will be better for the Labour Party, too, which then will be free to get to grips with practical politics.

There are many directions in which Labour thought would be free to develop and justify

its existence as a strong and independent party, capable on occasion of taking office. There are the early ideas of co-partnership and profit-sharing; there are Guild Socialism and Syndicalism; there is the tremendous problem, as interesting and vital to the welfare of Labour as of Capital, of increased efficiency. Sort out the speeches made from the Labour benches this last Session, empty them of generalities, and imagine them made each from one or other of these points of view, and what a wonderful difference in relevancy and practicality there would be!

LORD CARSON



LORD CARSON.

XVII

LORD CARSON

OF all the great men in English history, Gladstone was surely the worst judge of political human nature. Before he introduced his first Home Rule Bill he is said to have felt quite sure about Chamberlain and very doubtful about Harcourt. Some overtures for support he did make to English Conservatives, but Irish Conservatives he ignored and, what was still more remarkable, he forgot Ulster, then a Liberal stronghold.

To an ordinary man, it would have been an obvious counsel of prudence to sound Ulster and, if possible, persuade her beforehand. Had he done so and met with any measure of success, the first Home Rule Bill would have been a better Bill than his own, and had even more Home Rule in it, for the only way of reconciling Ulster to the idea of Home Rule for Ireland was then, as now, by the offer of Home Rule to herself. In fact, it would have been a Bill on the same general lines as the Act now in force. Had such a Bill been introduced a

generation ago, the North and South would by this time have composed their differences; Irish politics would have been running on the same wholesome differences between Liberal, Labour, and Conservative that divide opinion in other countries, instead of following the wholly unnatural divisions of geography and religious faith; there would have been no rebellions; and Lord Carson (the familiar "Sir Edward" is still hard to merge in the new title), if he had not developed into a Grattan, would have been, at any rate, Lord Chancellor of a united Ireland.

Alas, the Conservatives were the first to understand Ulster, and Mr. Balfour was the first to recognise the gifts of Lord Carson.

The mean and unworthy estimate of Lord Carson's character, though it can be made to fit in with a great many facts, is the wrong one, and it is not, in reality, that of Ireland generally. He is not an Ulsterman, though he speaks for Ulster; though narrow he can be generous; he is free from the religious bigotry which is the curse of Northern Ireland; he has the brogue, not of Belfast, but of Galway, the most beautiful of all the monuments of melancholy in Ireland; and he loves his country—not part of it merely, but the whole. It is one of the tragedies of Irish history

that his gifts should have been at the service of half a province instead of the cause of united Ireland, and there are times when one suspects that he feels it as tragedy of his own life too. For no one has heard him replying to Mr. Asquith on a question of Irish policy without suspecting that, apart from the specific disagreement of the moment, there is deep down in his nature a feeling of personal resentment against official Liberalism for warping his nature and twisting the sort of work that he might have done for Ireland.

Between him and the remnant of Irish Nationalists in the House there was no such gulf. They belaboured each other, but with it all there was some understanding and a great deal of respect, and of Sir Edward Carson, when he was organising rebellion in Ulster, there was far more popular admiration even in the rest of Ireland than there was in all England, outside Liverpool and the Carlton Club. But in every gesture towards the official Liberal benches there is the same accusation of faithlessness —" We were yours and you cast us off "—a charge that cannot be brought against Nationalism or Sinn Fein.

One ought not to ignore this grievance of Lord Carson as a good Irishman against the blundering tactics of Gladstone which

presented him with it, for, rightly handled, the question of Home Rule in 1886 was far easier than now, and might have been solved. But if he has a grievance, so have others—England and Ireland both—against him. He did not teach Ireland to rebel, but he led the only successful rebellion she has made, and the lesson was not lost. Ireland as a whole, too, has a grievance against him as a lost leader of union.

The most dramatic apparition to be seen in the House of Commons has until the other day been that of Lord Carson at the door when an Irish debate was proceeding. Especially now, with the Irish Nationalist Party a mere twittering ghost of its former greatness, there is always an element of theatricality in Irish debates; someone said once that there ought to be a row of footlights all round the Irish coast. It may be the theatricality of Irish debate, or there may be some positive suggestion in the tall, lank figure, the straight black hair, the hollow cheeks, and the lengthened chin, but one could not help thinking of Mephisto in the play at such times.

And the impression is not removed by the rich brogue and is deepened by the corrosion and negation of what he says. Nothing in

politics seems worth while when he speaks; Irish ideals are balloons blown up with gas; a new thought or hope is treated like a hostile witness; the great world pines to the dimensions of a poky court of justice, and nothing seems to matter but what is concrete enough to be put into an affidavit. It is all magnificently done, for Lord Carson has not risen on nothing to the position of perhaps the most famous of living advocates. He has in a supreme degree the faculty of dissolving a state of mind into little crystals of fact and holding each up to the light that is appropriate to his purpose. No one in our time at the Bar has had his power of unexpected thrust and stab in cross-examination, and he has so cultivated the habit of always speaking at the greatest common measure of intelligence in a jury that he has lost the power of rising above it. Outside Irish affairs—for example, on labour topics—he speaks occasionally with flashes of originality and sentimental insight, but ordinarily on politics he is a barrister whose rare distinction of manner cannot disguise the mediocrity and dullness of what he has to say.

If Lord Carson had never turned rebel, popular opinion would have neglected him as a politician; but his organisation of the contingent rebellion in the North of Ireland made

him a scoundrel in the eyes of many and a hero with others, and with nearly all profoundly modified the estimates of his character. A few, indeed, there were who still refused to take his politics seriously; to them he was still a stage Irishman only, bedadding and bejabering, even when he was talking hypothetical treason and civil war.

In fact, his action at this time proved the exact contrary. It may not have been a great thing for him at his time of life to throw up an exceedingly lucrative practice and devote himself entirely to the work of organising resistance to the enforcing of the Home Rule Act. But it was a great thing for him to run the risk of arrest and the social disgrace, not to speak of the physical danger, of being a rebel. It was proof that he really cared, that his denunciation of Home Rule was the outcome of real conviction, and even that he had the stuff of martyrdom in him. There is no exaggerating the mischief that was done to the country by the formation of the Ulster army; but when all is said, it is a test of sincerity that a man should in the last resort be prepared to fight in a cause of conscience when he is convinced that no other honourable issue is possible. And by that test the Government of the day which did not arrest Sir Edward Carson

stands condemned in its Irish policy. Whatever Irish policy was to be adopted later, it must inevitably after that be a policy that did not involve the coercion of Ulster, and to have established that principle, if a negative achievement, redeems his political career from barrenness and contempt.

Lord Carson might have done still more and achieved political greatness had he, after this victory, known how to use it for the service of all Ireland. For now—because rather than in spite of the war—was the time to achieve the unity of Ireland, and Lord Carson, by close co-operation with the Unionists of the rest of Ireland, if not with the Nationalists too, might have achieved that end. The opportunity was neglected and Lord Carson remained the leader of a province when he might have been so much more. The truth was—and his brief tenure of office during the war confirms it—that he is quite without constructive ability of any kind. Absolutely dependent on others for his general ideas, he might have served a greater cause than that of Ulster had he fallen early under the right influences. But the official Liberal Party first neglected him and then abused him, as it did Chamberlain and later (so far as the abuse went at any rate) Mr.

Lloyd George, and he never realised all of which he might have been capable. There were also faults of temperament as well as of mind. For all that is said of his personal kindliness and good-nature, there are hundreds of instances that might be quoted in support, and the caricaturists who see the man with the Red Indian profile and the combative jaws see less than strangers who, meeting him for the first time, are fascinated by the dark melancholy of the eyes. He is a man of a deep emotional nature, and the show of truculence is only the protective hardening of a skin that is more tender than most people's. But there are some humans—perhaps more numerous in Ireland than elsewhere—whose devotion to those who depend on them takes the form of intense distrust and ferocity towards everyone else. They rend and tear, not out of cruelty but out of a too restricted and, as it were, provincial range of affection. Lord Carson was of these, and the fact ruined him as a national politician.

CAPTAIN ELLIOT



[*Vandyk*

CAPTAIN ELLIOT.

XVIII

CAPTAIN ELLIOT

IF it be objected that Captain Elliot resembles a stalagmite rather than a pillar that supports the roof of the State, the answer is he is only young yet, and that youth as such has rights of its own. Captain Elliot has turned thirty by a year or two. There are others who are even younger, but extreme youth tends to be old-fashioned. Captain Elliot, while old enough not to be that, is still young enough to realise that the ends of the next generation are in the keeping of him and his likes. Let the future, therefore, redress the heavy balance that the past has had in these pages.

Captain Elliot comes of prosperous yeoman stock in Lanark, read medicine at Glasgow University with some contemporaries of genius as yet unknown to fame, served with the Scots Greys at Cambrai and other hot places, and at the end of the war was elected as a Coalition Unionist. It was a strange choice for a man of his temperament, but when

reproached with his political nomenclature, he points out that Unionism is not Conservatism, but includes Liberal and Radical elements. He came to London thinking that he might combine laboratory work with work as a Member, but Parliament turned out in his case to be a jealous mistress, and instead of walking in hospital he is oftener flying in politics—with a preference for the kite observation service. But he retains his deep interest in public health, and he has a room at the Scottish Office by virtue of some minor unpaid post. In appearance he is large and unbeautiful, in the way of the Newfoundland dog, and though, like this noble animal, he will sometimes upset social kickshaws and tea-trays in a drawing-room (metaphorically speaking, of course), he is in much request amongst fashionable and other people for his gaiety and high spirits, and the originality of his views. Yet he has known sorrow. Two years ago he and his wife were on their honeymoon in Skye, were benighted in a thick mist on a mountain-side, and fell down a scree. She was killed, and he escaped with injuries and a serious illness. As always with the perfervid Scot, there are deep and unsuspected holes in his nature, like the lakes in his own mountains.

His speaking in the House, though fluent

and not unmelodious, is too much like his talking to be in a good Parliamentary manner. He has none of the airs and graces of debate, he attacks instead of wooing his subject, and his speech has the jerky, breathless movement of thought. Many people think he is joking when he is merely exaggerating an aspect of truth, and several times he has been in danger of acquiring the reputation of a humorist, which is always fatal to solid success in Parliament. His friends say that his political gifts show better in conversation than in public speech. Certainly on his day, and especially on his night, he will make political talk more interesting than any speech dare be. A proposition begun in a quizzical drawl will, like a mountain stream issuing from a bog, end in a spate. Paradox generates paradox, and yet they are always relevant to the matter in hand, never tangential nor idly discursive. He has a Highland fondness for splashing about in generalities, but also the Lowlander's instinct for what is practical. It is at such times that one understands why his position in politics is higher than his actual performance in the House, though this is not inconsiderable, would suggest.

Like most men who have seen much active service in the war, Captain Elliot loathes the

idea of human purification through pain and suffering. He has brought back from the front both the soldier's habit of jesting at death, and a crusader's zeal against life that is compounded of misery and ill-health. One has often noted that amongst men who have seen dreadful things at the war. The same man will mockingly sing that cruel soldier's ditty:

> Do you want to find your sweetheart?
> I know where he is: (*tris*)
> He's hanging on the old barbed wire.
>
> (*Chorus*) I saw him, I saw him,
> Hanging on the old barbed wire, I saw him,
> Hanging on the old barbed wire—

and then tingle with sensibility over a Debussy prelude, and rebuke the stay-at-home's political apathy to the preventible pain around him. War has with many hardened the skin to a carapace, and at the same time softened the heart beneath. The army, at any rate, is not for stinting any help that politics can give to the underdog, and in this respect Captain Elliot represents the feelings of the younger generation.

The young ex-officer from the war, of whom Captain Elliot is a type, has not yet fulfilled in our politics all that was expected of him. The fertility and novelty of idea which were so fascinating when he was under discipline are

apt to sport rather violently when that discipline is removed, and from the trenches to the lobbies is a dangerous transplanting. But ex-officers like Coote, Austin Hopkinson, and Elliot, have brought into the House something that the old regular army never could give it, and their combination of boyish enthusiasm with the realism that comes of looking death so often in the face may have something of permanent value for our politics.

Some examples may be given of his politics, because they not only help to explain him, but show how completely the war has confused old party lines, and how impossible it is for a realist to return to the old party allegiance. Captain Elliot visited Austria in 1919, and came back with a rooted dislike of the tyranny which the ideas of nationalism have exercised over men's minds in the last ten years.

Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum

might have been said, though it was not, by someone fresh back from the Crusades, and in that spirit Captain Elliot regarded the follies of unchastened nationalism in the partition of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. Perhaps it is natural for Unionism to deplore the excesses of the national spirit, but in his insistence that economics are as important a factor in shaping

the life of a state as blood or language, he nearly comes full cycle round to the Manchester school and vindicates the reality of the economic man, at any rate in international affairs. In the same vein was an argument he one day developed in the House, with the experience of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before him, against Home Rule for Scotland on the ground that it might impose delays in transit between the two countries.

On Ireland and on labour politics, also, Captain Elliot showed that he belonged to a younger school which has outgrown the old divisions of thought. His view on Ireland (and that of Captain Coote, who works and lives with him in a little house in Westminster)—was that, having made up our mind to give Ireland Home Rule, we ought to give the amplest and most generous measure. He was prepared to allow Ireland to have its own army and navy even, and he ridiculed the fear that it would involve any risk to England. "Are you afraid of an Irish Republic? Why, I should threaten them with an Irish Republic if they didn't behave." He is never tired of developing the theme that the Englishman is ridiculously nervous and self-depreciatory, and too inclined to apologise for his existence in the world. He took an active part in the con-

troversy on the coal stoppage. Strongly opposed to the miners' project of a national pool, it was he who was responsible for Mr. Frank Hodges' visit to the House of Commons, which broke up the Triple Alliance.

It is too early yet to prophesy the future political development of Captain Elliot, but that with reasonable luck (and luck plays a great part in politics as in war) he will take a prominent place some day seems in the highest degree likely. It may be that he will attach himself to a new and improved Liberal Party. He may join a new school of Unionist Coalition, such as Lord Birkenhead and Mr. Churchill might conceivably head. Certain it is both that he has no sympathy with Lord Derby's Conservatism, and that his early enthusiasm for the present Coalition is weaker. But settlement comes late in political life—sometimes it does not come at all—and the straightest minds will execute the strangest curves between youth and maturity. So may his.

PARLIAMENTARY
GOVERNMENT

POSTSCRIPT

THE FUTURE OF PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT

DEMOCRATIC government in England is passing through a crisis of which the country is only vaguely conscious. It feels that constitutional changes are in progress, but it ascribes the causes of discontent to decay in the quality of Members of Parliament or to increasing selfishness and lack of principle amongst its leaders. Neither explanation is true, either in fact or as a diagnosis. The trouble goes much deeper than any defects in personnel. Indeed, despite the popular belief, the personnel alike of the Government and of Parliament at this time is far above the average. We have a Prime Minister who has certainly more genius for politics than anyone in English history since Chatham, and he has a Ministry of All the Talents. Nor is Parliament below the level of its predecessors, except in its lack of an Opposition. That apart, it has more than the average ability, and in elasticity of mind and accessibility to argument, two of the greatest virtues a Commons can have, it is easily first in modern times. As for honesty, ninety-nine

men out of a hundred are honest, and neither Ministries nor Members of Parliament fall below this percentage. Of all the vices of political discussion, none is so contemptible as this habit of explaining political difficulties by debiting with some moral kink those who differ from us. There is no rational debate on politics possible which does not start from the assumption that we are all decent people, honestly desirous of doing the best for our country. Those who will not subscribe to that had better give up politics and turn mad fakirs or howling dervishes.

The trouble is not in the bad character of politicians, but in the fact that there are new forces at work of which our intellectual appreciation is still very imperfect, and if that be so, one has cause for thankfulness that our age is stirring. It is further evidence in addition to that furnished by the war that we are far better than our fathers, who lived on the interpretation of old ideas in politics and not on the fashioning of new ones. Another shallow diagnosis is that our troubles proceed from the neglect of the old principle of Cabinet responsibility under which the Cabinet thought and acted as one man, and the smallest act of any one department was treated as the solemn decision of the whole Cabinet. The principle is dead beyond hope or desert of resurrection.

What is the sense of expecting not only the Prime Minister, but every other member of the Cabinet, to know everything that is happening in every other department? Peel, as long ago as 1845, defied the Prime Minister to perform properly the theoretical duties of his office, and the duties of Government in those days were compared with those of to-day, as a bow-windowed shop to a vast emporium. Besides, the principle is fatal to Parliamentary efficiency. Parliament has some chance of defeating the policy of a single Minister; but if he is to be sheltered behind the doctrine of Cabinet responsibility, its only effective form of protest against any action is to commit hari-kari.

The burden of nearly all comment on the British Parliament in the last twenty years is the growing power of the Executive, due to the stricter organisation of the party system, the development of the caucus, and so on. Undoubtedly, Coalition has increased this disturbance of the balance. Under the old party system, you had at any rate one party for which the Government could not conceivably do right; but now under a Coalition the criticism of the Opposition is that of a minority of a party. A huge Government majority is the worst enemy of efficient Parliamentary work. This evil, which is indubitable and is as bad for the

Government as for Parliament, is likely to be cured before long, for the Coalition can hardly remain on its present basis. Coalition in some form is the condition of politics for the next ten years at least, for there is as little life in pure official Conservatism as in official Liberalism. Conservatism, by splitting off from Mr. Lloyd George, would form a party little larger than that of the official Liberals, and for the sake of the Coalition is it to be hoped that, if it proposes to obstruct and distort its policy, it will split off and lose no time about it. The future of politics is with a Centre composed of progressive Liberals and Conservatives, and if possible, also of a bourgeois Labour group, for the Labour Party is a very artificial unity, and logically for Parliamentary purposes ought to split too. This Centre party (whatever its precise name may be) might have Liberal and Conservative fringes. Opposite it would be the bulk of the Labour Party. In this sense, Mr. Lloyd George is right in envisaging the future of politics as a contest between the bourgeois and the Labour parties. Those Labour men who are to be detached are much nearer to the Coalition than to the Independent Liberals, and the notion of an alliance between Labour and the Wee Frees is both impracticable and, if it were practicable,

would be suicidal for the Liberals. The thing to pray for is a Coalition without its recalcitrant Conservatives and with the progressive Wee Frees, with a smaller majority, and if possible with an alliance with the Labour right wing.

But this grouping and regrouping of political parties is only the froth on the surface. The main current of politics is, as has already been said in these pages, towards a sort of Liberalism, not that of the priests of Abingdon Street, but such as Mr. Lloyd George, if freed from his entanglements, might profess and ensue. But underneath the main current there are undercurrents, and our concern is rather with these. For it is of the future of Parliamentary rather than of national politics that we are now thinking.

The strongest of these undercurrents is the contention between Parliamentary authority and the representative system in politics on the one hand, and what may be called the principle of direct action in government. The direct action party in Labour politics, which seeks to accomplish its ends by economic pressure without reference to the slower methods of Parliamentary persuasion, everyone knows. But there has grown up in Government quarters a direct action party which likes to appeal to the sovereign people direct, through

the Press now that the platform is losing its power, and over the heads of its constitutional representatives in the Commons. The extreme jealousy which Parliament shows towards the newspapers is not without cause, for there has been a sensible change in the balance of the constitution; it is like the old jealousy which the senate had towards the comitia and the forum in the later days of the Roman Republic. Between the vast ochlocracy of the electorate which is easiest reached through the megaphone of the newspapers and the Triumvirate of the Inner Cabinet, the representative system is in danger of being crushed out. It is sometimes said that when the Irish question has been settled, the last of the old political issues will have disappeared, and the basis of political controversy will be shifted definitely on to an economic basis. But is not this new issue between the representative system of government and direct rule a political issue of the first constitutional importance?

The victory of the representative system is by no means a matter of course as is generally imagined, for the growth in the power of the Executive is one of the commonplaces of politics, and the methods of politics must constantly be changing their mechanism. The printed word has long been superior to the

spoken, and with universal education its mastery has become stronger. Not only is its appeal far wider, but whereas the effect of a speech is transient and the atmosphere of a public meeting is of all most unfavourable to calm deliberation, the printed word can be taken home, read a dozen times, and examined in every possible light. The public meeting is already tending to become obsolescent; the real influence over an electorate is in the printed reports of a meeting, which are usually very inadequate, and in the comments of writers. It may be that the representative system, however useful with a limited and illiterate electorate, may be obsolete in a community in which everyone can read. The largest public meeting at an election does not exceed 5,000, which is an exceedingly small circulation for a newspaper, and, moreover, the newspaper appears every day, whereas, even at times of the greatest politcal excitement, meetings that appeal to a tithe of the circulation of the good daily can only be addressed once a fortnight on the average. It may be that the representative system was only a temporary expedient adapted to small electorates and an illiterate age, and that the printing press will transfer our politics back to the stage at which the fortunes of nations were determined by a forum speech.

The printing press, in fact, does enable a prominent politician to gather forty million people in a forum and address them as though they were a crowd of a few hundreds. True, the words are spoken first, but that is only an accident, and it is easy to leave out the speech and deliver it direct to the Press. The future politician may well say to his rival, "You may hold all the meetings if I can control a few newspapers." This is the real menace to the representative system, and to the authority of Parliament.

While the printed word is daily extending its influence, oratory has been as steadily declining in power, and the methods of Parliament, with a few alterations, are what they were fifty years ago. In this unequal competition Parliament must sooner or later succumb, unless it reforms its methods, and with it we shall lose the representative system and revert to the old methods of appeal to the casual crowd in the forum, only the appeal will be in print, and the forum at the fireside of every elector who can read. Already Parliament is dependent on the publicity it receives in the newspapers.

It would be a disaster if direct Cabinet, or worse still merely personal, rule through the newspapers were substituted for the control of Parliament, for no one can see much of Parlia-

mentary work without recognising that, however great its imperfections, it is after all superior as an instrument of democratic government to the casual readings and ponderings on what they read of millions of separate electors. But the tendency of the age is very definite, and it is all against the continued authority of Parliament, especially if this authority is under any suspicion of subservience to party or persons.

What are the remedies suggested for a danger that is grave and more imminent than is generally suspected? The first is an improvement of the House of Commons' methods of doing its work. Question time is the freshest and liveliest time of the day, and it ought to be extended so as to give an opportunity daily for an interpellation or a short debate on the question of the hour. Nothing so shakes the authority of Parliament as its enforced silence on the subjects that are most in men's minds. Yet another and very important change would be an extension of the Committee system, which would give Commons Committees the right to call for all relevant documents, to inspect and to prepare a considered report on every subject of importance, and to give independent guidance to the debate.

But there is another and more important reform if Parliament is to maintain its con-

stitutional position, and the spoken word is not to be defeated by the printed word. Parliament must act; an opinion may be ignored by a popular Press, but acts cannot be. The strategic key of the situation is the right to dissolve Parliament at present possessed by the Government, and the strongest of all the arguments that a Government can use against revolt is the threat that if it is defeated it will go to the country. This power must not remain in the hands of the Government if Parliament is to maintain its position.

"Resignation, nothing more, might be borne. But, in fact, resignation means that Parliament, too, comes to an end—in other words, that every Member is fined £1,000 in election expenses, and this power of fine tells heavily against the free and independent Parliament that the country wants. True, the country sent them to Westminster to support a Government and a policy, but surely with their heads on, not without them. If with their heads on, they must be free to vote against the Government; if they are not to be free, Parliament might just as well be a cash-register with 700-odd parti-coloured keys, a complicated mechanical toy for Whips to play with.

"It is not only the financial fine that matters. An honest vote on Ireland, by bring-

ing about a General Election, may prejudice half a dozen other reforms in which the House is interested. The independent Member has to ask himself, 'Shall I, by making, for example, Sir Eric Geddes as Minister of Transport impossible, or by throwing out the E.P.D., imperil a settlement in Ireland or a real peace in Europe?' That sort of reflection, so fatal to real independence, should not perplex him, and would not but for the Government's power to have a General Election as and when it chooses. If the Government is defeated in the Commons, it is *prima facie* a sign, not that Parliament should be re-elected, but that the Government should be reconstructed.

"What, then, is needed? Simply this: that a Parliament, elected for four or five years —it might be four or three—should sit for its natural term unless it agrees by a vote that it cannot carry on. If it defeats the Government, but does not want a General Election before its time is up, then, if the Government cannot honestly give way, a new Government should be formed that will. All Governments will resist a change that so seriously undermines their power over Parliament. All Parliaments should, therefore, work for a reform that will so usefully alter the balance of political power.

"Having gone so far, we must go farther.

Another dull patch in the lungs of democracy is the fact that as things are Parliament has no real control over taxation. It cannot propose or impose a new tax, which is as well. But neither can it take off a tax without bringing down the Government. The country, or the greater part of it, rocked with indignation when the Lords threw out the People's Budget. Finance was the concern of the popularly elected chamber alone. But when did the Commons throw out a Budget? When is it going to begin to exercise real control over taxation? And if neither the Commons nor the Lords control, what is our system of taxation but one of Executive requisitions, tempered by the right of the Commons to throw everything in the melting-pot, including the careers of its Members, by defeating the Government and bringing about a General Election?"[1]

No, it is not true, as is sometimes said, that the main interest of politics in the future will be economic rather than political. For there is, or should be, a great constitutional struggle ahead between the Executive and the Commons—a struggle in which this time the House of Lords may take part on the same side as the Commons.

[1] *Scrutator* in the *Sunday Times*.


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